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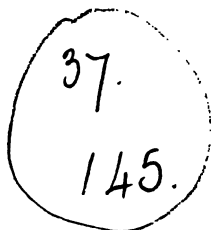
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**THE CHRISTIAN ARMED AGAINST
INFIDELITY.**

A

COLLECTION OF TRACTS

IN

DEFENCE OF DIVINE REVELATION.

WITH A PREFACE

BY THOMAS JACKSON.



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PREFACE.

THE present is eminently an age of Christian profession and effort ; and it is no less an age of scepticism and infidelity. Unexampled exertions are made by means of schools, Missions, the distribution of the Bible, and the multiplication of religious books, to bring all nations to the obedience of faith ; and, on the other hand, the most determined attempts are made to neutralize all these agencies, and create an utter disregard for the religion of Christ.

The policy which infidels at present adopt is peculiar. They do not, in general, like their less cunning predecessors, make direct attacks upon Christianity as a whole, or openly speak of it as a fraud ; nor do they undertake to answer any of the more distinguished defences of revealed truth, such as those of Lardner, Butler, and Paley ; but they endeavour to lose sight of it, to divert the public mind from its doctrines and claims, and silently to substitute for it the principles of what is called “ natural theology.” By this

means intellectual vanity is stimulated and flattered. Religion is made a matter of original discovery, like the physical sciences ; and the student deems himself a philosopher, who rests all his deductions on the basis of sensible fact and experiment. At the same time a slur is cast upon the leading doctrines of the Bible, which are occasionally singled out and spoken of as the unauthorized dogmas of Divines, and of the superannuated adherents of creeds and confessions of faith ; for natural theology knows nothing of the fall of man, and of the consequent corruption of human nature ; nor can it acknowledge the atonement of Christ, or the regenerating influence of the divine Spirit. The mediation of Christ is thus superseded ; and it is left as a matter of absolute uncertainty, "whether there be any Holy Ghost." Perhaps it may be regarded as an opinion, or a probable conjecture, that the soul exists in a future state ; but the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, of the general judgment, to be executed by the Lord Jesus in his office of Mediator, of the final happiness of the just, and the endless misery of the impenitent and unholy, is given up as a prejudice of which philosophy knows nothing, and which it therefore repudiates. Such is the

manner in which Christianity is treated in several modern publications, affecting a popular character, and circulating among the reading classes of the community.

To assist the anxious inquirer in forming a just judgment concerning this great controversy, and to preserve those who have already received the truth as it is in Jesus from fatal error, are the objects contemplated in the re-publication of the following tracts; which are especially designed for the use of young persons, and for such as have not much time to employ in reading. The first gives a condensed and impressive view of the vices, crimes, and misery which prevailed in the most polite and civilized nations of pagan antiquity; and of the favourable change which has invariably been effected wherever Christianity has been practically received. The fact is undeniable, that in exact proportion as individuals, families, and states, yield to the influence of scriptural Christianity, their welfare is in every respect infallibly secured. War is at an end; equitable laws are formed; government is administered with justice mixed with mercy; the laws are respected; the people are rendered industrious, humane, and honest; provision is made for the poor and

afflicted; the domestic relations are sanctified, and families are scenes of tranquillity and hallowed affection; violence, oppression, and wrong are unknown; and mankind live together as a vast and happy fraternity. Surely the claims of a religion which is productive of such results are entitled to a patient and candid examination, and are not to be rejected at the caprice of every shallow and conceited pretender.

The second tract in the series is a neat and elegant epitome of the evidences which are usually adduced to prove that Christianity is, in the strict and proper sense, a revelation from God. This point is especially argued from prophecy and miracles, neither of which could have taken place without a direct interposition of the divine wisdom and power. To describe with minuteness and accuracy events which are many hundred years distant, and which depend upon innumerable contingencies, is beyond the utmost stretch of human sagacity; and to raise the dead to life is equally beyond the last effort of human strength. Prophecy and miracles are the broad seal of Heaven impressed upon the Christian religion, the deep characters of which no perverted ingenuity can ever efface.

These two beautiful tracts were written by a Prelate, whose elegant scholarship, catholic spirit, and pious zeal, reflected honour upon the Church to which he belonged.

The third tract was written by Bishop Taylor; a man who was equally distinguished by the sanctity of his manners, the vigour of his imagination, the extent of his learning, and the richness and force of his eloquence. It forms a part of a large folio volume, where ordinary readers can have no access to it, and where it is given as a specimen of "moral demonstration." The vast accumulation of concurring circumstances which the writer has adduced to prove that the religion of Jesus Christ is from God, is perfectly irresistible to a candid and ingenuous mind. The man who can attentively read this remarkable composition, and yet deny the conclusion to which the author conducts him, must be either insane, obstinately perverse, or an example of stupid credulity.

Mr. Charles Leslie was a man of strong sense, and a powerful reasoner. His tract, which forms the fifth in the series, bears the date of 1697. The Jewish and Christian revelations rest upon certain great facts, which are alleged to have taken place; and the author

lays down four rules to prove that those facts themselves, and the means which were employed to perpetuate the remembrance of them, were both of such a nature, that they could not possibly be the fabrications of a later age. The facts being admitted, the doctrines connected with them must be true. In its published form this tract is addressed to a man ; but it was originally written for the satisfaction of a lady, who had been staggered even to distraction by the arguments of Deism. She had not indeed become a professed Deist ; but she was not able to answer the objections which its advocates proposed to her, nor to explain the matter so as to satisfy her own mind. Having been often told that the Gospel of Christ is but a fable, like that of Mahomet, or the heathen gods, these thoughts used to dart into her mind in the midst of her devotions, and even at the holy sacrament ; “ which,” said she, “ if Christianity be a truth, seemed to me to be blasphemous ; and that I was provoking God while I pretended to worship him.” Leslie adds, “ This at last wrought so powerfully with her, that she came to abstain from all prayers, even in private, and was in a most deplorable condition, owning that she was often tempted to destroy herself, which

she was afraid would be the issue. I found that discoursing with her had but little effect ; for in that violent discomposure she could not give attention, but would fall out into terrible exclamations, wishing herself dead, or that she had never been born. I then wrote this letter to her, free from all intricacies, and prevailed upon her to copy it with her own hand ; thinking that this would fix her attention the more, and prevent those wandering thoughts which interrupted her consideration of what was offered to her in discourse. By the blessing of God this had the desired effect ; for she came to reason calmly, and at last was fully convinced. She was able to keep her ground with the Deists, by the four marks, which none of the stories they told her of the heathen gods, of Mahomet, or the legends, could come up to. Some had the first mark ; some the second ; and some the third ; but all stuck at the fourth. None of them had all the four. It was by her persuasion, and of some others to whom she showed my letter, that I was prevailed with to let it be made public.

“ I have had several conferences with some Deists upon the argument ; but the issue has been, that they were to find out some fact that was false, which had all the four marks ; and

though they named many, yet none was found that would bear the test. Nor could they find any supposititious book which had these four marks for its veracity, as the holy Scriptures have, which were commenced at the time they speak of, and were written by the actors of the facts they relate, or by eye and ear witnesses."

As the Deists who were contemporary with Leslie failed in all their attempts to answer the argument of his book, so those who have since endeavoured to grapple with it have been equally unsuccessful. Leslie's argument, which is so plain and easy that a child may understand it, is a knot which no unbeliever has been able to untie. Dr. Middleton, one of the most learned and ingenious of the fraternity, is said to have spent many years in the attempt, and at length abandoned it in despair.

The last tract in the series is a dialogue, written by the ingenious Dr. Mason, of New-York. It presents a fair specimen of the character of many modern unbelievers,—profane, confident, superficial, flippant. Men who habituate themselves to an irreverent use of the divine Name manifest an impious levity of temper which ill qualifies them for the calm investigation of a question so important as

that of the divine mission of the Lord Jesus. The tract also shows the light grounds upon which some men reject the Gospel, and brave the fearful threatenings which it contains. Here was a person of education and refinement, openly denying the Lord that bought him, without a single argument to justify his conduct ; and urging the pitiful plea, that the claims of Christianity are not substantiated by mathematical but moral proofs, the force of which he could not comprehend ! His unbelief was not occasioned by any defect in the evidence of revelation, but by his own inattention, and his love of vice in one form or another. True wisdom is always serious, candid, and thoughtful.

Should the reader be desirous of further information concerning the great question of the truth of revealed religion, he will do well to consult, among other publications which may be easily obtained, Dr. Paley's Evidences of Christianity ; Bishop Watson's Apology for Christianity, and his Apology for the Bible ; with what relates to the same subject in the first volume of Mr. Hartwell Horne's Introduction to the study of the holy Scriptures, and in the first part of Mr. Watson's Theological Institutes.

The question which has been decided by


these able writers, and by many others who have employed their pens on the same subject, is, in its nature and consequences, the most momentous that can be conceived. If God has indeed spoken to men by his Son, and by Prophets, Evangelists, and Apostles ; and if the communications which he has made to them of his mind and will are faithfully recorded in the book which Christians all believe to be of divine authority ; then the claim which the Gospel has upon our belief and practical attention is absolute, and will admit of no compromise. The denial of any doctrine which Christ and his Apostles have clearly and distinctly taught, is a denial of God's truth ; and a refusal to comply with the requirements of their doctrine, is no less a crime than that of disobedience to the Almighty's will. Faith is a duty, binding upon the consciences of men as much as the precepts of the Decalogue ; and the moralizing sceptic, who denies the divinity of our Saviour's mission, and rests in what he calls " the light of nature," whatever he may think of himself, and whatever others may think of him, is convicted of the atrocious sin of giving the lie to the God that made him. Resisting the evidence *which the Gospel miracles supply*, he refuses

credence to the testimony which God hath given concerning his Son, and spurns all the mercies of redemption. Language fails to express the fearful amount of guilt which such conduct involves. What, then, shall be said of the open blasphemer of Christ, and avowed despiser of evangelical truth and blessings? On this subject the Son of God has not been silent; and the awful import of his words it becomes every man to ponder. Concerning infidels of all classes he has said, "He that believeth not shall be damned."

We have then evidence of the truth and divine authority of the Christian religion, the most decisive and convincing, and such as no man ever did or can disprove. This evidence has produced conviction in the minds of the most accomplished scholars, and the most profound thinkers, that ever lived; and all the objections that have been urged against it, whether in ancient or in modern times, have been fairly met and answered. Its direct and legitimate results are all demonstrably beneficial. This is matter of daily experience and observation; and it is matter of history. We conclude, therefore, that practical conformity to the religion of Christ is the highest wisdom, *as it is the indispensable duty of every man.*

Many unbelievers have died in agonies of guilt and despair, lamenting in the bitterest manner the sin of making light of Christ and his salvation. Many nominal Christians upon the bed of death have uttered the most affecting regrets, that their spirit and conduct had been at variance with their convictions; and that they had rested in the bare profession of religion, neglecting the assiduous cultivation of the true Christian character. But never—and this is a fact which deserves the profoundest attention—never was it known that a dying believer contemplated with shame and sorrow the devotion of his whole life to Christ. Faith in him creates no sorrow in the remembrance, and inspires no fear in regard to the future. Obedience to his commands lays no trouble upon the conscience, and excites no dread of the coming judgment. Verily his yoke is easy, and his burden is light.

There is something in Christianity which produces the most rich and solid satisfaction, both in life and death. It satisfies the understanding, by the discoveries which it makes concerning God; the creation of the universe; the origin, fall, redemption, and end of man; discoveries which the human mind in the *highest* state of cultivation could never of



itself make, but which, when made by revelation, recommend themselves by their consistency, sublimity, and holy character and bearing. It satisfies the conscience, by directing the self-convicted and penitent transgressor to the sacrificial blood of Christ, which cleanseth from all sin ; and by placing him under the influence of the sanctifying Spirit of God, by the power of which he becomes both inwardly and outwardly holy. It satisfies the boundless desires of the human spirit, by bringing it into a state of direct and happy intercourse with God in Christ, out of whose fulness it may receive grace for grace to an unlimited extent, and by opening the bright prospect of immortality. It alleviates all the afflictions of mankind, and sanctifies all their enjoyments. It makes the poor contented, and the rich benign. It renders the widow and the orphan cheerful ; the afflicted, patient ; and even fills the dying with unutterable joy and hope.

Practical Christianity is therefore the truest philosophy. He is the best patriot who does most to leaven the community with Christian godliness. To fill the world with evangelical light is the purest benevolence. Education is *essentially defective* when it does not compre-

hend an acquaintance with the nature and evidences of our holy religion. All parents, tutors, and the guardians of youth, sin against God, against their charge, and against their own souls, when they neglect this great object, whatever they may secure beside. Wealth, science, profane literature, however important in themselves, are utterly worthless, when compared with this. All secular accomplishments and possessions will fail; but the benefits of Christianity extend through eternity, and will only be fully disclosed there. Its plan was laid in the Eternal Mind before any part of creation rose; and its blessings will retain all their freshness and value when the earth shall be burned up, and all the heavenly bodies shall cease to move and shine. They are deathless as the human spirit, and as the mercy of God from which they freely emanate.

LONDON,

October 9th, 1837.

THE
BENEFICIAL EFFECTS
OF
CHRISTIANITY
ON THE
TEMPORAL CONCERNS OF MANKIND,
PROVED
FROM HISTORY AND FROM FACTS.

BY BEILBY PORTEUS, D.D.,

BISHOP OF LONDON.

THE
EFFECTS OF CHRISTIANITY,
&c.

SECTION I.

THERE are few arguments against the truth and divine origin of the Christian Revelation, on which the adversaries of our faith more frequently and more vehemently declaim, than that spirit of cruelty and intolerance which they contend is its distinguishing feature, and the endless massacres, wars, and persecutions, with which they affirm that spirit has desolated the Christian world.

That too many of the professors of our religion have, by their intemperate and inhuman conduct, brought reproach upon the Gospel, and extreme misery upon their fellow-creatures, is, it must be confessed, unquestionably true ; but it

is no less true, that others ought to bear a large share of that odium, which is generally thrown exclusively on the disciples of Christ ; and that it is not Christianity, but human nature, that is chargeable with the guilt of persecution. It is beyond a doubt, that a large part of those bitter dissensions and sanguinary contests which have been usually styled "religious," and with the entire guilt of which Christianity has been very unjustly loaded, were altogether, or at least in a great measure, owing to political causes ; and that difference of opinion in matters of faith has much oftener been the ostensible, than the real, cause of those calamities which have been ascribed to it. But allowing it to have been in some cases the real cause, still the Gospel itself stands perfectly clear of all blame on that account. Whatever mischief persecution has done in the world, (and it has, God knows, done full enough,) it was not Christ, but some mistaken followers of Christ, that brought this sword upon earth ; and it would be as injurious to ascribe to Christianity the false opinions and wrong practices of its disciples, however pernicious, as to impute to the Physician the fatal mistakes of those who administered his medicines. The very best laws are liable to be misinterpreted and perverted. It was the fate

of the evangelical law to be so. Its spirit was misunderstood, and its precepts misapplied by some of its avowed friends ; and its authority made use of as a cloak for ambition, resentment, cruelty, and oppression, by some of its secret enemies. But the Gospel all the while was guiltless of this blood. It disclaimed and abhorred such unnatural supports, which it was as far from wanting, as it was from prescribing. It authorized the use of no other means of conviction, but gentleness and persuasion ; and if any of its disciples have, by a misguided zeal, been betrayed into violent and sanguinary measures, the blame is all their own ; and it is they must answer for it, not Jesus or his religion.*

But this is not all. The defence of our divine religion against the charge of cruelty must by no means rest here. We contend not only that it has never been the real source of any misery upon earth, but that, on the contrary, it has added most essentially to the sum of human happiness ; that it is not only in its own nature calculated to promote the peace, the welfare, and

* To impute crimes to Christianity, says the celebrated King of Prussia, in his *Posthumous Works*, is the act of a novice. His word may fairly be taken for such an assertion.

the comfort of mankind, but that it has actually done so ; that its beneficial effects are in a greater or a less degree visible throughout the Christian world ; and that, considered in all the various points of view in which it presents itself to our observation, and in all its different bearings on the several conditions and relations of human life, it appears evidently to be the greatest and most substantial blessing, even in the present state, that Heaven in its bounty ever conferred upon the sons of men.

In order to establish the truth of these assertions, I must beg the reader's attention to the following plain statement of facts, which the most determined and most ingenious adversary of the Gospel will not, I apprehend, find it very easy to controvert.

I. It is on all hands admitted, that from our domestic relations flows a very large proportion of the misery or the comfort of human life. Among these, the first in order, and from which the others take their rise, is the state of **MARRIAGE**. And here Christianity first displays its beneficent spirit.

The two great banes of connubial happiness among the ancient Pagans were polygamy and *divorce*. The first of these, it is well known,

prevailed, and does at this hour prevail, through almost every region of the eastern world. The other was allowed for the most trivial causes, and exercised with the most wanton cruelty, in the later ages of Rome, not only by the worthless and the profligate, but by some of the most distinguished characters in the republic: * and both of them evidently tended to destroy that mutual confidence, harmony, and affection, that constant union of interests and of sentiments, which constitute the supreme felicity of the matrimonial state. Besides this, the treatment of married women in general, among the ancients, was harsh, ungenerous, and unjust. And at this day (for the spirit of Paganism is at all times, and in all places, the same) the savages of North America, as well as those of the new-discovered islands in the South Seas, consider their wives

* Among many others, Cato Minor, Cicero, and Augustus, were all highly culpable in this instance. But the brutal inhumanity of Pompey towards his wife almost exceeds belief, and drew after it a long train of most tragical consequences. For the sake of connecting himself with Sylla, he repudiated his wife Antistia, and married Æmilia, the daughter-in-law of Sylla, and then living with her husband. Antistia's father had before been murdered on account of his attachment to Pompey; and her mother, shocked at the cruel treatment of her daughter, destroyed herself. Æmilia soon after died in childbed in Pompey's house.—PLUT. in *Pomp.*

as little better than slaves and beasts of burden, and use them accordingly.

To all these cruelties Christianity (wherever it is received and professed with any degree of purity) has put an effectual stop. It has entirely cut off that grand source of domestic wretchedness, polygamy; and has confined the dangerous liberty of divorce to one only cause, (the only cause that can justify the dissolution of so strict and sacred a bond,) namely, an absolute violation of the first and fundamental condition of the marriage contract,—fidelity to the marriage-bed.* It

* The historian of "The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire" has been pleased to observe, (vol. iv., p. 380,) that "the ambiguous word which contains the precept of Christ respecting divorce is flexible to any interpretation that the wisdom of a legislator can demand, and that the proper meaning of the original word *πορνεία* cannot be strictly applied to matrimonial sin." But if that author would have given himself the trouble to look at 1 Corinth. v. 1, he would have perceived that the word *πορνεία* not only may be applied to matrimonial sin, but is actually so applied sometimes by the sacred writers; and in the place just cited can scarcely admit of any other sense. In this sense it is also used by our Saviour, Matt. v. 32; xix. 9. And this being incontrovertible, it is, I confess, past my understanding to comprehend, how this precept of Christ can be flexible to any other meaning than that plain and obvious one which it bears upon the very face of it, and in which it has been hitherto constantly understood; namely, that the only legitimate ground of divorce is adultery.

has provided no less for the security and comfort of the weaker part, than for the sovereignty of the stronger. It has established just so much command on one side, and just so much subjection on the other, as is necessary to prevent those everlasting contests which perfect equality must unavoidably produce. It lays, at the same time, a foundation for increasing harmony and tenderness by mutual obligations and reciprocal concessions ; and gives to each more frequent opportunities of displaying their affection, by ruling with mildness, and submitting with cheerfulness.

There cannot, indeed, be a finer proof of the benevolence of our religion than this regard and consideration for that part of the species which most wants, and yet in this instance, before the promulgation of the Gospel, did least enjoy, the privileges of humanity. In effect, the condition of this sex, at least in the conjugal state, is so infinitely superior to the part assigned them by the Heathens of old, and the Mahometans and Pagans of this day, that they seem to be a different rank and order of beings. Instead of being considered merely as necessary parts of the family, of being confined to the loom and the distaff, and excluded from many of the most

essential comforts of life ; (which was their case in the most civilized nations of antiquity ;) instead of being entirely cut off from all commerce with the world, imprisoned for life within the walls of a seraglio, and looked upon in no other light than as instruments of pleasure ; as having neither rational minds nor immortal souls ; as born only to minister to the happiness of others at the expense of their own ; to be the slaves of sensuality, caprice, and revenge, which is still their condition in eastern countries ; instead of this, I say, they are now, by the gradual prevalence of Christian principles and manners, admitted to an equal share in the advantages and the blessings of society. Their understandings are cultivated, their minds improved, their sentiments refined, and their interest and happiness uniformly and properly consulted in every important concern of life.

II. Next to this, in the order of domestic relations, stands the PARENTAL. Here, if any where, one would imagine that mankind must always be the same. One would conclude that nature, by planting in our breasts a most passionate fondness for our offspring, had effectually provided against every act of inhumanity towards them ; had made the force of parental

love a sufficient barrier against the encroachments of parental power. But in this, as in a thousand other instances, it is evident, that nature, speaking with all her force and eloquence to the heart, was not able to make men hear, or at least obey her dictates. The Gospel was more powerful. It heard and commiserated the cries of infancy, and came in to the assistance of helpless and unprotected innocence; insomuch, that it is most literally and strictly a peculiar happiness to be born in a Christian country.

It is well known, that in some of the most celebrated heathen nations, the pitiable state of infancy, which so much wants the care and indulgence of a parent, was not always able to obtain it; and that in those cases where humanity and compassion pleaded most strongly in its behalf, it was treated with a more than ordinary degree of cruelty. Every one will understand me here to mean the custom of exposing, that is, of murdering, weak, deformed, or sickly children, which was for many years practised not only with impunity, but with applause; and what is now considered as the most atrocious of crimes, and worthy of the severest punishment, was then esteemed a wise political expedient, to rid the state of useless and troublesome mem-

bers, and was even enjoined by some of their most celebrated sages and legislators. This was one of those blessed effects of philosophy and the fine arts, of which we hear so much from a certain class of writers.*

The condition of those children that were suffered to survive was, in some of those countries, scarce less deplorable than the fate of those who were condemned to die. The extreme rigour of their education, exceeding all the bounds of virtuous discipline, and contrary to all the dictates of natural tenderness; the unlimited power allowed to the father, extending to the liberty and even life of the child, and the intemperate use they too frequently made of this power, rendered the situation of their youth in general extremely irksome and unpleasant, sometimes truly miserable.

These inhumanities are now no more. No-

* The same practice still subsists in China, a country so much celebrated by modern philosophers for the wisdom of its institutions. About nine thousand children are said to be annually exposed in the city of Pekin, and the same number in the rest of the empire. See BARROW'S *Travels in China*, pp. 170—176.

Among the Hindoos, children are hung up on trees in baskets, and devoured by birds of prey; and female infants among the Rajpoot Hindoos are destroyed by starving.—BUCHANAN'S *Mem. on India*, App., pp. 94, 97.

thing can exceed the tenderness shown by parents towards their offspring in Christian countries, from their earliest infancy to their ripest maturity: and so far is the public from countenancing in private individuals the destruction of their children, that it guards against any unnatural desertion of them, and is itself a parent. The power of the father is just sufficient for all the useful purposes of education; the severity of education no greater than the proper culture of the mind requires; and there subsists in general between the elder and the younger parts of a family, that harmony and good understanding which resembles the easy intercourse of friends, rather than the awful distance between authority and subjection.

III. But in no part of domestic society are the happy effects of Christianity so visible as in the lowest, though not least useful, branch of it, that of *SERVANTS*; agreeably to the blessed spirit of that religion which lends its aid most willingly where it is most necessary, in raising the lowly, in healing the broken spirit, and cherishing the contrite heart.

It has been justly observed, that under most of the governments in Europe (severe as some of them are) the bulk of the people do in reality

enjoy more true liberty than was ever possessed by the lower classes, under the freest states of antiquity : because, with a few exceptions, (which are every day lessening,) they are no longer subject to that worst of all oppressions, domestic servitude ; whereas, in all the ancient republics, by far the greatest part of the inhabitants were not freemen, but slaves.* In fact, every private family was, in the times of Paganism, a little despotic kingdom. The master was the tyrant, and the servants his wretched subjects, whom he bought and sold, and treated as he did his cattle ; whom he could punish and torture as he pleased, and put to death with or without reason, and even for his own amusement. It is true, indeed, that the *vernæ*, or home-born slaves, were sometimes treated with lenity, and even with tenderness and indulgence. But these favourites of fortune bore a very small proportion indeed to that immense multitude who were made to feel the utmost rigour of their condition. In general, these wretched

* In the 110th Olympiad, there were at Athens only twenty-one thousand citizens, and four hundred thousand slaves. In the small island of Ægina, there were four hundred and seventy thousand slaves. It was common for a private citizen of Rome to have ten or twenty thousand. —TAYLOR'S *Civil Law*, pp. 436, 437.

beings were continually exposed to every evil that the most wanton tyranny could inflict. They were compelled frequently to till the ground in chains,* or confined in subterraneous dungeons, and strained to labour beyond their strength by the severest treatment. They were obliged to suffer every insult and every injury, without resistance and without redress. They had no protection afforded them, could have no justice done to them, no reparation made to them.† They were subject to the cruelty, not only of their own masters, but of every one that met them. “They had no place to flee unto, and no man cared for their souls.” The hurt that was done to them and to a beast was estimated in the same manner. Nothing was considered, but the diminution of their value, and the loss sustained by their master. The injury or the pain endured by the slave himself never came into contemplation. Their evidence was scarcely ever taken but by torture. They were not supposed capable of being applied to in any other way. If their master happened to be

* *Catenati cultores, vincti fossores*, are expressions we frequently meet with in the Roman authors.

† *Cum in servos omnia liceant*, &c.—SENECA de Clement. l. 18.

found murdered in his house, every slave in the family (which sometimes amounted to several thousands) was frequently put to death, even those that were confessedly innocent. Nay, they were sometimes made the sacrifice of a youthful frolic, and murdered in the streets and roads, by thousands, for amusement. These are the effects which the possession of unlimited power over our own species has actually produced, and which (unless counteracted and subdued by religious principle) it has always a natural tendency to produce, even on the most benevolent and best-cultivated minds.*

* It would be endless to produce all the instances we meet with in history, of the incredible barbarity of the ancients towards their slaves. The few that here follow may serve as a specimen :—

Two thousand Helots, who had been promised their freedom, and were led round the streets of Sparta in triumph with garlands on their heads, soon afterwards disappeared, and were never heard of more ; but how they were destroyed, no one ever knew.—THUCYD. l. iv.

The youth of Sparta, it is well known, frequently lay in ambush for these wretched slaves in the night, and sallying out upon them unexpectedly, with daggers in their hands, murdered in cold blood every Helot they met with.

The Ephori also, as soon as they entered upon their office, declared war against them in form, that there might be the appearance of destroying them legally.—PLUT. *in Lyc.*

At the time when L. Domitius was Prætor in Sicily, a *slave happened to kill a boar of uncommon size. The Præ-*

Such was the temper of Paganism towards a very large class of the human species: a class, too, which ought to have attracted pity and protection, instead of meeting with the bitterest oppression. The temper of the Gospel was of a different cast. From the very first moment of its appearance, it gave every consolation, every support, to those who groaned under this heavy bondage, that was consistent with the peace and welfare of society, and with the avowed princi-

tor, struck with the account he had received of the man's dexterity and intrepidity, desired to see him. The poor wretch, overjoyed at this distinction, presented himself to the Prætor, expecting, no doubt, applause and reward. But Domitius, understanding that he had killed the boar with a hunting-spear, the use of which (as well as of all other arms) was forbidden to slaves, ordered him to be immediately crucified. The barbarity of this punishment is scarce more astonishing and atrocious than the perfect indifference and unconcern, with which the orator relates and reasons upon it: *Durum hoc fortasse videatur; neque ego ullam in partem disputo.*—CICERO in *Verrem Actio*. ii., l. 5, c. 3.

It was the custom of Vedius Pollio, when his slaves had committed a fault, (sometimes a very trifling one,) to order them to be thrown into his fish-ponds to feed his lampreys. —SENECA *de Ira*, iii. 40. *Id. de Clement.* i. 18. PLIN. l. ix., c. 23.

A certain Roman being found murdered in his own house, all the slaves (to the number of four hundred) were instantly put to death. The historian adds that this was done, *vetere de more.*—TACIT. *Annal.* xiv. 43.

ples of the Christian religion. The first teachers of this religion did not indeed expressly prohibit slavery : nor did they tell the slaves whom they converted to the faith, that their conversion made them free, and released them from the obedience due to their masters. This would have been a most imprudent and dangerous doctrine, dangerous both to the teachers and the disciples. It would have occasioned the former to be represented by their enemies as adverse to all authority and subordination, as disturbers of the peace and order of society ; it would have armed against them all the powers of the earth, and overwhelmed them and their infant system of religion in one common ruin. To the slaves themselves, it would have been equally destructive and fatal. It would have excited them to violent and sanguinary, yet vain and ineffectual, resistance ; and would have involved them, finally, in far greater miseries than they before experienced. But besides this, such a proceeding would have been diametrically opposite to the distinguishing character and genius of the Christian revelation ; one of whose leading and fundamental principles was, not to interfere with, or oppose itself in the least to, any peculiar form of government, any civil institu-

tion, any long-acknowledged and long-established authority, either political or domestic; but on the contrary, to inculcate a peaceful and dutiful submission to all lawful superiors; to "every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake." 1 Pet. ii. 13. Yet, at the same time, it took care to lay down such general rules of conduct, and governing principles of action, for all ranks and conditions of men, as should silently and quietly, but effectually, correct the inherent vices or adventitious corruptions of every kind of power; such as should gradually soften and smooth away the asperities of every species of arbitrary government, whether supreme or subordinate, whether exercised over nations or individuals; and rather meliorate and reform them by gentleness, than subvert and destroy them at once, by open force and violence.

Another great principle of this divine religion, and its divine Author, was, to require from its followers a meek submission and patient resignation to evils, and sufferings, and persecutions of every kind, however unmerited, however unprovoked and unjust. "I say unto you, Resist not evil; bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; not rendering

evil for evil, or railing for railing : but contrariwise blessing. Avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath ; for it is written, Vengeance is mine ; I will repay, saith the Lord." Matt. v. 39, 44 ; 1 Peter iii. 9 ; Röm. xii. 19. In perfect conformity to these precepts was the example of our blessed Lord ; " who when he was reviled, reviled not again ; when he suffered, he threatened not ; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously." 1 Peter ii. 23.

With these ideas and these sentiments, so predominant in every page of the sacred writers, it is evident what course the great Founder and the first Preachers of Christianity would take, respecting the long-established and almost universal practice of domestic servitude. Notwithstanding the extreme hardships and cruelties inseparable from that condition, they would not think it expedient to annihilate at once the authority of the master, and burst asunder suddenly the bonds of the slave ; but would suggest to the one such motives to acquiescence and submission, and to the other, such reasons for moderation and tenderness in the exercise of his power, as they well knew would greatly lighten the miseries of this state for the present, and by *degrees* totally remove them.

Accordingly, masters were enjoined to give to their servants (that is, their slaves) that which was "just and equal, and to forbear threatening;" and they were told, what they had never been told before, that they also had a Master in heaven, with whom was no respect of persons, Col. iv. 1; Eph. vi. 9; who would one day demand from them a strict account of the use they had made of the unlimited power they possessed over their unfortunate fellow-creatures. They must know also, and would frequently be reminded, that they, as well as every other disciple of Christ, are commanded to consider all mankind as their brethren, 1 Peter iii. 8; to treat them as such, to love them as themselves, to be condescending, gentle, tender-hearted, merciful, compassionate, and kindly affectioned towards them, and of course towards their slaves also.

To the slaves, on the other hand, the most express commands were given, "to be subject to their masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward: to please them well in all things; not answering again, not purloining, but showing all good fidelity; not with eye-service, as men-pleasers, but as the servants of Christ, with good-will doing

service, as to the Lord, and not to men." Eph. vi. 5—8; 1 Peter ii. 18; Titus ii. 10.

These precepts were evidently meant to guard against all provocation, all neglect of duty, all want of attention and diligence on the part of the slave; to render him meek, humble; patient, submissive, honest, industrious, faithful; and by thus disarming the anger, and conciliating the affection, of his master, to lighten, as much as possible, the weight of the chain that was upon him. At the same time, the slaves had encouragements and consolations held out to them, to which their heathen brethren were utter strangers. They were told, that by serving their masters well, they were not only "pleasing men, but God; that they were adorning the doctrine of their Saviour; that they were to look forwards for their reward to the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; and that whatever good any of them did, the same should he receive of the Lord, whether he were bond or free." Eph. vi. 6, 8; Titus ii. 10, 13.

These were considerations sufficient to support, and soothe, and strengthen their souls under the harshest treatment, and the heaviest pressures of bondage; while the prudence, the fidelity, and the obedience, recommended to

them, would avert or soften the severities to which they were exposed. With these injunctions to the slaves on the one hand, and to the masters on the other, there can be no doubt that the condition of the Christian slave was far easier and happier than that of the Pagan. And wherever these injunctions are faithfully and conscientiously observed, the evils of servitude will be in a great measure subdued, and some of its sharpest stings will be drawn out. But this was not all that the Gospel did for this unfortunate race of men. When the empire became Christian, laws were made for their protection and relief. The influence both of government and of religion was continually operating in their favour, and gradually prepared the way for that happy event which, to the immortal honour of Christianity, took place in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries; I mean the utter extinction of the pagan system of slavery in Europe. It is true, indeed, that in consequence of the feudal tenure, and feudal customs, introduced into Christendom by its barbarian conquerors, another species of servitude for some time prevailed, under the name of villanage. But this, in point of severity, was not to be compared with the horrors of ancient slavery.

And even that new servitude by degrees gave way, in the greater part of the Christian world, to the mild genius of the Gospel, insensibly mixing with the civil policy, and tempering the laws, customs, and usages of every country that received it.*

SECTION II.

WE have seen, in the preceding section, that in every domestic relation Christianity has visibly and undeniably promoted the happiness of mankind. Nor is its beneficial influence less evident in all the great and important concerns of civil and social life.

In the article of government, its operation has been highly salutary and useful ; not by enjoining or prescribing any peculiar form of government, (for with the kingdoms of this world, and

* Christianity has already effected the extinction of slavery in the British West Indies ; and from the principles which are in operation in the United States of America, it may be confidently hoped that, at no very remote period, it will cease in that extensive republic. The same results will unquestionably follow in the French, Spanish, and Portuguese colonies, when those countries are brought under the influence of scriptural Christianity.—EDIT.

the various modes of civil institutions, it disclaimed all concern,) but by regulating the respective duties, both of those who governed, and those who were governed. It reminded the latter that their Christian profession did by no means dissolve or weaken (as some of them were apt to imagine) their political obligations, but on the contrary confirmed and strengthened them; that under whatever form of government they lived, and whatever allegiance they owed, before their conversion, the same was still due from them after it; that their religion made no other alteration in the case, than that of rendering them still better citizens and better subjects, and of enforcing every civil tie, by the sanction of divine as well as human authority. They were not therefore to use their spiritual freedom "as a cloak of maliciousness," as a cover for faction and mischief, for dissension and tumult; as a pretence for disturbing the peace and order of society: but they were to submit themselves patiently to "every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake;" they were to be subject to those rulers under whom Providence had placed them, and Christianity found them, "not only for wrath, but also for conscience' sake." They were "to obey Magistrates, to be ready to every

good work, to render to all their dues, tribute to whom tribute was due, custom to whom custom, fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour." 1 Peter ii. 16, 23; Rom. xiii. 5, 7; Titus iii.

In the same manner, it was required of their rulers, that, however unlimited their power might be by the laws and constitution of their country, they should themselves limit and restrain it by the great immutable laws of moral rectitude; that they should observe, in their public as well as private conduct, the dictates of justice, equity, moderation, mercy, humanity, and universal goodwill, which the Gospel prescribed to them, as well as to every other disciple of Christ. Their duty was repeatedly set before them with the utmost plainness and freedom. They heard, and trembled as they heard, the inspired Preachers reasoning before them, concerning "righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come." They were told, that the authority they were invested with was given them to be "a terror, not to good works, but to the evil;" that they were ministers of God for the good of their people; that, of course, if they abused this power to cruel or wicked purposes, they must be accountable for that abuse to the great Governor of the universe; must stand before his tribunal with the meanest

of their subjects, to be recompensed for the blessings they had bestowed, or punished for the miseries they had inflicted, on mankind. Acts xxiv. 25 ; Rom. xiii. 3, 4.

It could hardly fail, but that precepts such as these, repeatedly inculcated and deeply impressed on the minds of those to whom they were addressed, would produce the most beneficial consequences ; and so in fact they have. For nothing can be more evident, than that the various modes of established and legitimate government now existing in Europe, are either in their form or their administration, and sometimes in both, far superior to those of the same description in the ancient pagan world, and consequently productive of much greater happiness to those who live under them. Were it convenient or proper to enter here into a minute comparison of these different political fabrics, it would be extremely easy to prove the truth of what is here asserted ; but I must content myself with very briefly contrasting some of the principal outlines and distinguishing features of civil policy in ancient and modern times, which will, I conceive, sufficiently justify the opinion here advanced.

1. In the first place, it is well known, that except in the free states of Greece and Rome,

(and that only for a few centuries,) a ferocious despotism prevailed over the greater part of the ancient habitable globe ; and that even those celebrated republics scarcely ever enjoyed (at least for any considerable period of time) two of the sweetest and most valuable fruits of liberty, and without which indeed no true liberty can long subsist,—internal tranquillity and external peace. They were continually agitated and distracted within by popular commotions and sanguinary convulsions, or exposed without to unceasing and inexpiable wars, which always destroyed their repose, and sometimes endangered their very existence. This was the case, with but few exceptions, even in their most perfect state ; and, in their decline, they were mangled and torn in pieces by such dreadful massacres and proscriptions, by such deliberate and premeditated methods of murdering each other, as cannot be recited without pain and horror.*

* See more particularly the account which Thucydides gives, lib. 3, of the sanguinary dissensions, seditions, tumults, and convulsions, which distracted the little island of Corcyra ; and the historian assures us, that the same miseries were experienced afterwards in almost every other part of Greece. See also *L'Origine des Loix*, &c., v. 5., p. 74.

The horrible proscriptions of Marius, Sylla, and the triumvirs, and the dreadful civil wars between the leading

2. We may perceive, that in the freest ancient states, they could scarcely ever maintain a true, genuine, equal liberty, diffused through the whole mass of the people, and distributed in just proportions, (as it is in this kingdom,) through every rank and order of the community. They were always in danger, either from the artifices and power of the few, or from the licentiousness and violence of the many; and whilst they guarded some one avenue with the greatest care, tyranny generally surprised them at another. Nor did their boasted freedom (such as it was) extend in general much beyond the walls of the metropolis, and the adjacent territory. It could seldom subsist, but under the immediate influence of the Legislature. The Governors of the provinces, removed from under the eye of the supreme Magistrate, and destitute of all religious restraint, became the most savage and merciless of tyrants.

men of the republic, which followed soon after, are well known.

The same scenes occurred perpetually in the annals of the Assyrian, the Median, the Persian, the Turkish, the Moorish, and the Hindostan empire. The principal source of all these horrors was the want of a merciful religion; and the same want has, we all know, produced the same direful effects in our own times in a nation where all religion was at once annihilated.

The unhappy people over whom they presided were continually exposed to plunder, rapine, oppression, insult, and every kind of injury; and thus, whilst liberty reigned in the centre, the utmost rage of despotism laid waste the extremities of the empire.*

* See *Choix des Memoires de l'Academie Royale*, first part of v. i., p. 151.

The character of Verres was, to a great degree, the character of almost all the Roman Governors. Cicero, speaking of the provinces generally, says, *Populatæ, vexatæ, funditus eversæ provinciæ: socii stipendiariusque populi Romani afflicti, miseri, jam non salutis spem sed exitii solatium quærunt.*—In. Q. Cecil. Divinat. 3. This is amply confirmed by Sallust: *Ignavissimi homines per summum scelus omnia ea sociis adimere, quæ fortissimi viri victores reliquerant; proinde quasi injuriam facere id demum esset imperio uti.*—Bell. Cat. xii.

The Athenians also treated the cities and islands dependent on them with the utmost rigour and inhumanity. It was their avowed principle, and their constant practice, to oppress, harass, and plunder them with the most unfeeling rapacity, to reduce them to the most abject state of dependence, and to create and foment perpetual dissensions and factions among them, in order to render them utterly incapable of annoying the parent state. See *L'Origine des Loix, des Arts, et des Sciences*, vol. v., p. 75. But more particularly consult that very curious and admirable treatise of Xenophon on the Republic of Athens; which, although professedly written in defence of the Athenians, yet exhibits such a picture of their iniquity, cruelty, and tyranny, as must for ever decide the opinion of every thinking man on the character of that mode of government.

3. One of the principal characteristics of a sound constitution is the system of laws which it has established for the protection and security of the people, and the regulation of public manners. If we judge of the ancient governments by this criterion, they will not rise very high in our estimation. I will touch only with great brevity on a few of the most remarkable laws in different countries.

Among the Egyptians there was a law, which not only encouraged but rewarded theft.*

The laws of Draco were, as is well known, immeasurably and capriciously severe. They were written in characters of blood. They punished with the same rigour the slightest offences, and the most atrocious crimes.

The laws of Lycurgus were, in many instances, unjust and cruel; and some of the most celebrated Greek philosophers have condemned them, as better calculated to form good soldiers, than virtuous and honest citizens.†

They encouraged theft, adultery, and many other gross immoralities and enormities.‡

* DIOD. SIC., lib. i., c. 80. AUL. GELL., lib. ii., c. 18.

† ARISTOTLE *Pol.*, lib. ii., c. 9, and lib. vii., c. 14. PLUTARCH in *Lyc.* endeavours to defend them, but in vain.

‡ *L'Origine des Loix*, &c., vol. v., p. 429. PLUTARCH in *Lyc.* Whatever might be the intention of the legislator, in

The Cryptia, or places of concealment, from whence the Spartans issued out upon the Helots, and murdered them in cold blood, is said by Aristotle to have been an institution of Lycurgus.*

But the consummation of all was, that this legislator not only permitted, but enjoined, the murder of sickly or deformed infants.†

In Solon's laws, there are several which are objectionable, but there is one in the highest degree reprehensible. It is that in which, though he did not enjoin, yet as far as he was able, he gave credit and estimation to, the most detestable of crimes; and even encouraged it by his own example.‡

In Crete and some other Grecian states, it was also encouraged by law.§

The laws of the twelve tables were sanguinary and cruel, more especially those respecting insolvent debtors; who, after an imprisonment obliging the Spartan boys to steal their victuals, &c., the real effect of it was to encourage deceit and fraud, and to render property insecure.

* PLUT. in *Lyc.*

† *Ibid.*

‡ PLUT. *Solon. sub. init.*

§ PLUT. *de Liber. Educat.*, c. 15. ARISTOTLE *Polit.*, l. ii., c. 10.

of sixty days, might be sold for slaves, or put to death, and their bodies divided among their creditors. Ingenious and learned men have endeavoured to explain away the severity of this law, but without success.*

Romulus allowed the murder of infants, and it does not appear that this practice was forbidden by any subsequent law. Some think it was confirmed by the twelve tables. It was, however, certainly permitted to pass with impunity; and the Roman state, as well as almost every other in the ancient world, was for many ages drenched in the blood of these innocent victims to a mistaken and inhuman policy.†

* A very learned critic and civilian has an ingenious dissertation on this subject, in which he undertakes to prove, that the law of the twelve tables did not condemn the insolvent debtor to death, but to servitude; he was to become the slave of the creditor, and to pay his debt by his labour. And if there were many creditors, they were to divide his personal labour among them, in proportion to their respective demands upon him. But this interpretation goes contrary to the concurrent opinions of Quintilian, Aulus Gellius, Tertullian, and other ancient authors, who all agree in supporting the plain and literal sense of the law. And it is not probable that a modern civilian, in the eighteenth century, should discover a meaning in a Roman law, which was totally unknown to the Romans themselves, See TAYLOR'S *Commentarius de inope Debitore in partes dissecando*, p. 15, and the authors above mentioned.

† DION. HALIC. *Rom. Antiq.*, l. 2.

The cruelty of the Roman law, with respect to children, did not stop here ; it was not content with the destruction of infants ; it extended its severity even to the adult ; it gave the father uncontrolled and unlimited power over his children ; it considered them not as persons but as things, as part of the furniture of the family mansion, which the master of the family might remove, or sell, or destroy, like any other part of the furniture, at his discretion. In one respect the condition of a son was worse than that of a slave. A slave could be sold only once, a son three times ; and he might be imprisoned, scourged, exiled, or put to death by the *paterfamilias*, without appeal to any other tribunal.* With respect to daughters, there was an act of power more exquisitely cruel than perhaps all the rest. The father could compel his married daughter to repudiate a husband whom she tenderly loved, and whom he himself had approved.†

But what was, if possible, still more preposterous and intolerable, the wife herself, though the mother perhaps of a numerous family, was subjected no less than her children, to the pa-

* NIEUPORT. *de Rit. Rom.*, p. 585.

† *L'Esprit des Loix*, t. iii., liv. 26., c. 3., p. 75.

ternal authority and despotic will of her husband. She was in the eye of the law considered as his daughter, and might be retained or dismissed at pleasure; and for certain crimes (some of them of a very trivial nature) might be put to death. The liberty of divorce also on the part of the husband was, as I before observed, almost unbounded, and in the later ages of the republic was perpetually exercised with the most wanton, insolent, and capricious tyranny.*

Such were the laws of the most celebrated nations of antiquity; and as the legislative acts of a country present us with the truest picture of its manners, and give us at one view the genius and the character of a whole people taken collectively, we shall be at no loss what opinion to form of the ancient Pagans and their government.

5. And as the laws were, in many important instances, inhuman or vicious, the administration of them was no less partial and corrupt. That great bulwark of liberty, that most power-

* *L'Esprit des Loix*, t. ii., p. 88; and the licentiousness of the women in this respect, (for they also had the power of divorce,) was at least equal to that of the men.—*Nunquid jam ulla repudio erubescit*, says Seneca, *postquam illustres quædam ac nobiles fæminæ non consulum numero sed maritorum annos suos computant*.—SEN. *de Beneficiis*, iii. 16.

ful protector of the rights and immunities, the persons and properties of the subject, the civil and criminal jurisprudence of the state, was, among the ancient commonwealths, very far removed from that degree of purity and perfection in which it is now found in some Christian countries, but more especially in our own. In what manner justice was administered at Athens, is evident, from their treatment of the two most upright and virtuous of their citizens, Socrates and Aristides; and by what motives the Judges were commonly guided in forming their judicial opinions on the character and merits of the accused person, may be collected from the well-known conversation between the latter of those illustrious men, and one of the Judges who condemned him.* In Rome, especially in the later periods of the republic, the courts of justice were one continued scene of the most open and undisguised iniquity, venality, partiality, and corruption, insomuch that it was hardly possible for a poor man to obtain redress for the cruellest injuries; or for a rich man to be brought to punishment for the most atrocious crimes.†

* PLUTARCH in *Aristid.*

† Xenophon, in his treatise on the Athenian republic, acknowledges that the courts of justice were to be influenced

In all these great and important articles of civil policy, (and in a multitude of others which by bribes; that they favoured and saved from punishment those to whom they were attached, and condemned those whom they hated. And in every instance it was the constant practice of the people, both at Athens and in the dependent states, to oppress the virtuous and encourage the most abandoned, as much as possible.

Thucydides assures us, (lib. vi.,) that the Athenians frequently thrust into prison, and condemned to death, the very best citizens, on the information of the most worthless and profligate.

With respect to Rome, the following facts will give the reader a faint idea of the manner in which justice was there administered:—

When L. Gellius and C. Lentulus were Censors, they expelled no less than sixty-four Senators for taking bribes in their judicial capacity. MIDDLETON'S *Life of Cicero*, vol. 1., p. 117. PIGHII *Annal.* A. U. 683.

The method which Pompey took to restore order and decorum in the Roman courts of judicature was of a sort which would occasion no small surprise in Westminster-Hall. He presided there in person with a file of soldiers. And yet, notwithstanding this prudent care to preserve the decorum and purity of judicial proceedings, he was not extremely scrupulous and delicate when his own friends were concerned. For when Scipio, his father-in-law, was impeached, he sent for the three hundred and sixty judges to his house, and implored their friendship to Scipio. (PLUT. in *Pomp.*) Yet this is the man whom Cicero calls *hominem integrum et castum et gravem*. *Epist. ad Attic.* xi. 6.

Such were the ideas which Cicero entertained of judicial integrity. And most of the great men of Rome seem to have entertained the same. For when Catiline was tried for some atrocious murders, many of the consulars appeared in

might be mentioned,) the infinite superiority of our own government, without having recourse to other kingdoms, admits of no question. And this, it may be safely affirmed, is in a great degree owing to the influence which the spirit of Christianity has had on our civil constitution, (with which it is closely and essentially incorporated and interwoven,) on the temper of our governors, on the temper of the people, on the temper of the laws, on the temper of those who framed and of those who administer them. It is this, principally, which has so softened and subdued the fierceness even of arbitrary power, that despotism in all its rigour (that rigour which it possessed in pagan nations, and still possesses in African and Asiatic kingdoms) is scarcely to be found in Europe. It is this which, by mitigating in some degree the rancour of contending factions against each other, and inspiring them with some little share of mutual charity and forbearance, has hitherto preserved this country from those scenes of carnage and devastation that stain and disgrace the annals of ancient history. It is this which has, in general, re-

his favour, and gave him an excellent character. And Cicero himself, on a similar occasion, was once disposed to undertake his defence. *Epist. ad Attic.*, lib. 1., ep. 1, 2.

strained our provincial governors from exceeding the bounds of equity and humanity in their administration; and has carried even to our most distant colonies a large share of the freedom, the justice, the ease, the tranquillity, the security, and prosperity of the parent state.* It is this, in fine, which has impressed on the minds of our Magistrates and our Judges that strong sense of duty to God, to man, and to their country, that sacred regard to justice and rectitude, which renders them, beyond all example, impartial, upright, and uncorrupt; which secures to every rank of men the equal benefit of the laws, which extends to the meanest their protection, and brings the greatest under their control.

II. Next to the miseries arising from cruel systems of domestic and civil policy, from bad forms of government, from oppressive laws and

* See the excellent Introduction to Mickle's Translation of the Luciad, and Rennel's Memoir on Hindostan. "The Bengal provinces," says the last well-informed and candid writer, "which have been in our possession near twenty-three years, have during that whole period enjoyed a greater share of tranquillity than any other part of India, or indeed than those provinces have ever enjoyed since the days of Aurengzebe. And it is a fact not to be controverted, that the Bengal provinces have a better government, and are in a better state as to agriculture and manufacture, than any other of the Asiatic countries, China alone excepted." P. 106.

corrupt forms of judicature, there are few evils more formidable and afflicting than those of war. And here, too, we have a manifest advantage over the ancient Pagans.

In Christian countries the horrors of war (that severest scourge of the human race) have been greatly mitigated, and their frequency, their duration, and their attendant miseries, considerably diminished. In confirmation of this fact, I would entreat the reader, when he is perusing the history of the ancient states, to pay a little attention to the nature, the origin, the number, the extent, and the continuance of their wars, and to the methods in which they were conducted. We are accustomed, from our infancy, to look on those people with such implicit and almost idolatrous veneration ; we are so dazzled with the splendour of their victories, and the glory of their conquests ; with the courage, the ardour, the intrepidity, the heroism, the grandeur, and elevation of mind they so frequently displayed ; and, above all, we are so charmed with the eloquence and the sublimity with which their martial achievements are recorded by their historians, and immortalized by their poets, that we never think of that *horrible inhumanity* which was the great promi-

ment feature of their character; we never see the torrents of blood they shed, in order to arrive at their favourite object, nor the various and inconceivable miseries they spread throughout the world. The plain truth is, that they were the common enemies of mankind; the oppressors, the plunderers, the robbers, and the tyrants of the whole earth. By much the greatest part of their wars were voluntary and unprovoked; were wars of aggression, of interest, injustice, rapine, and ambition. They gave their protection to every one that applied for it, without the least regard to the justice of the cause, for the sole purpose of extending their conquests; and the most solemn treaties were evaded or violated, without the smallest scruple, whenever their interest appeared to require it. A lust of empire, a passion for martial achievements, an insatiable thirst for glory, were the ruling principles of their conduct; and to these every other consideration, however sacred, was made to give way.* Their governments were

* The Athenians (says an historian who knew them well) were formed by nature never to be at rest themselves, nor to allow others to be so. THUCYD., lib. i.

The war against Syracuse, which led to their ruin, was founded in extreme injustice and ambition. The design of

little else than military establishments. Every citizen was a soldier, and every kingdom upon the watch to devour its neighbour. The surest road to the honours of the state was through the field of battle; and men were obliged to force their way by the sword to almost every object of their pursuit.

Whilst every thing thus tended to inflame the fiercest passions of the human heart, no wonder that the wars of the ancients were incessant and sanguinary; that the injustice and wantonness with which they were begun could be exceeded by nothing but the vindictive and implacable spirit with which they were carried on; the Athenians was, first to subdue Sicily, then Italy, then the Peloponnesus. THUCYD., lib. vi.

They thought it the natural turn of the human mind to grasp at dominion whenever it could be done. They confessed that they acted on this principle themselves, and supposed all other nations did the same. *Ib.*, lib. v.

They thought the shortest road to empire was to assist those that demanded their protection, without minutely inquiring how well they deserved it. *Ib.*

The Spartans, among one another, gave ample proofs of honour and virtue; but, with respect to the rest of the world, their rule of acting was to consider as honourable whatever was pleasing to them; and as just, whatever was conducive to their interest. *Ib.*

Let the reader also refer to the shameful perfidy of Posthumius to the Samnites, in Livy, lib. ix., c. 5, 11; and of Æmilius to Perseus, lib. 45, c. 8, 39.

and that the world was consequently for many ages overwhelmed with ruin, desolation, and bloodshed. The savage and cruel treatment of their captives in war is well known to every one in the least acquainted with ancient history; every page of which is polluted with scenes of this nature, too numerous and too horrible to be specified here. It is sufficient to observe, in general, that the loss of thousands in the field was in those ages the least part of the evils of war. Those among the vanquished who survived had reason to envy the lot of those that fell. Perpetual slavery, or an ignominious death (sometimes torture) by the hand of the executioner, were their certain destiny; and even among nations the most polished, and the most celebrated for their private and their public virtue, (such were the pagan notions of virtue,) we are continually shocked with the desolation of whole countries, with the entire destruction of flourishing and opulent cities, and with the indiscriminate massacre and utter extermination, not only of those able to bear arms, but of the most helpless and unoffending part of the inhabitants of every age, sex, and condition.

If we go back to the earliest ages of Greece, Homer very honestly and very concisely tells

us, what the general practice in his time was in one of the principal operations of war. "These," says he, "are the evils which follow the capture of a town. The men are killed, the city is burned to the ground, and the women and children are doomed to slavery."*

The descendants of Homer's heroes, in subsequent ages, did not in this respect degenerate from their ferocious ancestors. On the contrary, they kept constantly improving on those models of barbarity. After the taking of a town, and sometimes after the most solemn promises and oaths that they would spare the lives of the besieged, they murdered every human creature in the place, not excepting even the women and children. Instances of this sort occur perpetually in the Peloponnesian war, as well as almost every other.†

* *Iliad*. ix., v. 590.

† See Thucydides throughout: but more particularly the extreme cruelty of the Athenians and Lacedæmonians to their prisoners, lib. 2. The massacre of the Myteleneans and Plataeans, and the incredible barbarities at Corcyra, lib. 3. The murder of the Æginetæ and Megareans, lib. 4; of the Scioneans and Melians, lib. 5; of the Mycalessians, lib. 7. In this last instance, the Thracians not only butchered men, women, and children, without distinction, (even a whole school of boys,) but also every living animal that fell in their way. The historian, though in general very little affected

The Romans trod but too closely in the footsteps of the Greeks, their masters and preceptors in cruelty, as well as in every thing else. Abundant proofs of this occur in all their histories.*

with scenes of this kind, cannot help expressing his horror at such a slaughter as this. But, says he, by way of mitigation, *To γενοσ το των Θρακων φονικωτατον εστι*. It is true. But that epithet was applicable not only to those barbarians, but to the Athenians themselves, and to every other state in Greece. It describes, in short, most accurately, in one comprehensive word, the true character of all pagan antiquity. Most unfortunately for the world, this *γενοσ φονικωτατον*, this "murder-loving race," has of late revived; but let it be remembered, that it revived under the fostering care, not of the Gospel, but of its true parent, philosophy: by which word I mean, throughout this Essay, (when speaking of the present times,) not that genuine sublime philosophy which we meet with in the immortal works of Bacon, Boyle, Newton, &c., but those wild pernicious doctrines which assume the venerable name of philosophy, which have been disseminated through the world, principally by Voltaire and his numerous disciples and coadjutors, and are justly considered as the chief source of those dreadful calamities that have been for so many years desolating almost the whole continent of Europe.

* *LIVY*, lib. ix., c. 14; lib. xxi., c. 14; lib. xxvi., c. 15; lib. xlv., c. 34.

No less than seventy cities of Epirus were given up by *Æmilius Paulus* to be pillaged by the soldiers in one day, and at the same time one hundred and fifty thousand of the inhabitants were made slaves. *LIVY*, lib. xlv., 2, 34. *Polybius* informs us, (lib. x., frag. 2,) that when *Scipio* took Carthage, he

With respect to all the various nations of Asia, the whole history of that country, both ancient and modern, from one end of the conti-

ordered his soldiers to attack the inhabitants, and put them all to death without distinction, and to spare none according to the custom of the Romans. The historian adds, that the Romans did this to strike all nations with the terror of their name. And for the same reason he says, whenever they take a town, you not only see all the men put to death, but dogs, and other animals, cut to pieces, and their limbs scattered about the streets.

It is said of Julius Cæsar, that he had subdued three hundred nations, stormed a thousand cities, made a million of slaves, and put as many to the sword, either in the field or in towns. *PLUT. in Pompeio.* Yet this General was celebrated for his great humanity.

During the siege of Jerusalem, and in the course of the Jewish war, the number of Jews that perished by the sword was one million three hundred and fifty-seven thousand six hundred and sixty; and the number of captives was ninety-seven thousand. Those under seventeen years of age were sold for slaves; those above seventeen were sent to the works in Egypt, or dispersed through the Roman provinces to be destroyed by the sword or by wild beasts, and eleven thousand of them perished by hunger. Even Titus, the mild and merciful Titus, the *delicia humani generis*, treated those wretched beings with the most savage barbarity. In the shows and spectacles which he exhibited at Cæsarea, many of the captives were destroyed, some by wild beasts, and others were compelled to fight with each other. At the same place, in honour of his brother's birth-day, fifteen hundred Jews were slain; and a great number also at Berytus, in honour of his father. The same was done in other cities of Syria. Those whom he reserved for his triumph were

nent to the other, exhibits such an uninterrupted series of barbarity, bloodshed, havoc, and devastation, in their incessant wars, revolts, revolutions, and intestine dissensions, as it is impossible to contemplate without disgust, astonishment, and horror.*

Yet all this, and more than this, was naturally to be expected from the principles entertained and avowed by the great warriors and statesmen of antiquity. One of them was this: "To glut our souls with the cruellest vengeance upon our enemies is perfectly lawful, is an appetite implanted in us by nature, and is the most exquisite pleasure that the human mind can taste."† In this most exquisite pleasure they indulged themselves without reserve; in this species of voluptuousness they were certainly perfect epicures.

It is impossible not to remark here, the com-

Simeon and John, and seven hundred others of remarkable stature and beauty. NEWTON'S *Dissert. on Prophecy*, Diss. 20, part 3, vol. ii., p. 313.

* See the dreadful achievements of Gengis-Khan, Timur, Aurengzebe, and Nadir Schah, in the Histories of India and Persia.

† THUCYD., lib. vii., p. 540. The original words can scarcely be translated with sufficient energy, ἀποπλησσαι της γυνωμης το θυμουμενον. Even in the Pelew Islands they put their captives in war to death. *Account of Pelew Islands* by MR. KEATE, p. 33.

plete opposition between this favourite doctrine of Paganism, and the doctrine of revelation. "To glut our souls with the cruellest vengeance on our enemies is the most exquisite of all human enjoyments," says the former. "Avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath," says the latter. Nothing can so strongly mark the different spirit of the two religions; and the consequences to mankind have already in some measure corresponded, and will hereafter correspond still more, to that difference. Though too much fierceness and animosity, too much propensity to war, too many acts of passion and cruelty, are still to be found among the nations of the earth, yet the diabolical principle of vengeance is certainly much abated, and many of its most tragical effects are no longer seen. To a certain degree there must undoubtedly be disputes and contests both between kingdoms and individuals, so long as kingdoms consist of men, and men are subject to the infirmities of human nature. But that vindictive and implacable fury which raged in the breasts of the ancient conquerors does not seem to be, as it was then, the predominant passion, the general turn and temper, of the present age. It *seldom* happens that wars are now begun wan-

tonly and injuriously, (as they were perpetually among the ancients,) with the sole view of oppressing and enslaving an innocent and unoffending people. A thirst of power and of conquest has given way to more rational and humane pursuits; a certain gentleness of manners mixes itself in the warmest contentions; and even where recourse to arms is found unavoidable, there generally appears on all sides a mutual disposition to soften and alleviate, as much as possible, those dreadful evils which are, to a certain degree, inseparable from national contests. They who suffer in the field are now almost the only sufferers. The rest, though vanquished, are neither enslaved nor put to death. They are treated commonly with lenity and tenderness; and even when obliged to pass under the dominion of a foreign master, are sometimes benefited instead of being injured by the change.*

* The reader will perceive that all these observations relate solely to nations professing and practising Christianity. Where Christianity is extinguished, and philosophy substituted in its room, there you immediately see all the savageness of ancient Paganism regaining its empire over the mind, and manifesting its ferocious spirit in war, in civil dissension, in its laws, its punishments, and every other great concern of human life.

III. There is still another very remarkable instance in which the Gospel has put a stop to a species of cruelty of the most atrocious nature ; and that is, the entire abolition of human sacrifices. This horrible practice prevailed throughout every region of the heathen world, to a degree which is almost incredible, and still prevails in many savage countries, where Christianity has not yet reached. There are incontestable proofs of its having subsisted among the Egyptians, the Syrians, the Persians, the Phœnicians, and all the various nations of the east.*

* PORPHYRY *Περὶ Ἀποχρῆς*, lib. xi., s. 27. HEROD. lib. 7. It appears also to have prevailed to a dreadful degree among the ancient Hindoos. See MAURICE'S *Indian Antiquities*, vol. i., pp. 152—337. The vedas themselves, that is, the sacred books of the Hindoos, enjoined it, p. 162. See also in pp. 181—188, the horrible description of the black goddess Callee, to whom human sacrifices were anciently offered in Hindostan. From a very interesting publication by MR. BUCHANAN, one of the Chaplains at Calcutta, called "A Memoir on the Expediency of an Ecclesiastical Establishment in India," it appears that human sacrifices still subsist among the Hindoos. Death is inflicted in various ways in their sacred rites. Children are sacrificed by their parents to Gunga. Men and women drown themselves in the Ganges, in the places reputed holy. They devote themselves to death by falling under the wheels of the machine which carries their gods. Widows are burned and buried alive with their deceased husbands. And it was calculated, by the late learned Mr. William Chambers, that the widows who perish

It was, we all know, one of the crying sins of the Canaanites, one of the causes of their extermination by the hands of the Israelites, and one of the principal reasons of the many peremptory and tremendous prohibitions to the latter, not to have the slightest commerce or communication with those monsters of cruelty. Deut. xii. 29—32. Yet all these prohibitions did not avail to preserve them entirely free from infection. They suffered themselves to be sometimes drawn into this prevailing and detestable crime, and “offered up their sons and their daughters unto devils.” Psalm cvi. 37. The baneful contagion spread like a pestilence over every part of Asia, Africa, and Europe. No climate, no government, no state of civilization,

by this self-devotedness, in the northern provinces of Hindostan alone, are not less than ten thousand annually.—App., pp. 95. 98. This shows, in the strongest point of view, of what infinite importance it is to communicate the light of the Gospel to heathen nations, as it is the only effectual means of extirpating the savage customs to which they are all more or less addicted, especially that of human sacrifices. Christianity has already annihilated this horrible practice wherever it has been introduced. Does it not then become the British Government, is it not the duty of a Christian kingdom, to impart to their pagan subjects in India the blessings of the Gospel? which can alone completely civilize and humanize them, and which the above-mentioned Memoir shows to be perfectly practicable, if a sufficient ecclesiastical establishment is allowed to that country.

no mode of pagan superstition, was free from it. Even the Greeks and Romans, though less involved in this guilt than many other nations, were not altogether untainted with it. On great and extraordinary occasions, they had recourse to that which was esteemed the most valuable, the most efficacious, and most meritorious sacrifice that could be offered to the gods,—the effusion of human blood.* But among other more barbarous nations, it took a firmer and a wider root. The Scythians and Thracians, the Gauls and the Germans, were strongly addicted to it;† and even this island, where benevolence and humanity have now (thanks to the Gospel) fixed their seat; this island was, at one time, (under the gloomy and ferocious despotism of the Druids,) polluted with the religious murder of its wretched inhabitants. The evil reached from one end of the globe to the other; and on the first discovery of America, it was found that the

* PLUTARCH, in the Lives of Themistocles, Marcellus, and Aristides. LIVY, lib. xxii., c. 57. FLORUS, lib. i., c. 13. PROCOPIUS *de Bell. Goth.*, lib. ii., p. 38. VIRG. *Æn.* x. 518; xi. 81.

† HEROD., lib. iv. TACIT. *Annal.* xiii. c. 57. *De Moribus German.*, 9. CÆSAR *de Bell. Gall.*, lib. vi., c. 15, 18. *Histoire Philosophique et Politique*, &c., vol. vi., p. 175. MAURICE *on India*, p. 159.

southern hemisphere was even more deeply contaminated with this crime than the northern. In the midst of wealth, luxury, magnificence, and many of the polished arts of life, Montezuma offered twenty thousand human victims every year to the sun.* In one of the most powerful kingdoms of Africa † the same savage superstition still exists; and our own navigators found it established in every new-discovered island throughout the whole extent of the vast Pacific ocean.‡

What a picture does this present to us of human nature unsubdued by grace, and of human reason (that is, of natural religion, or, as it is now by the courtesy of the times called, philosophy) unassisted by revelation! And what a deep and grateful sense ought it to impress on our minds, of the infinite obligations we owe to the Gospel, which has rescued us from this, as well as from the many other abominations, enormities, and cruelties of Paganism! Wherever the divine light of Christianity broke forth, at

* Introduction to MICKLE'S *Translation of the Lusiad*, p. 7, note; and ROBERTSON'S *History of America*, vol. iii., p. 199, and note 31.

† Kingdom of Dahomi.

‡ Cook's last *Voyage*, vol. ii., p. 203.

that moment did this tremendous demon of superstition disappear. Human sacrifices are unknown in the Christian world, and "the land is no longer defiled with blood."

SECTION III.

To a plain and a common understanding, the facts which have been adduced in the two preceding sections would appear decisive in favour of the beneficent genius, and the divine origin, of our religion. But there is, it seems, a compendious and an easy way of getting rid of this sort of reasoning. The facts are admitted ; but the inference drawn from them is denied. It is allowed, that those happy changes in the face of human affairs, which have been here specified, have actually taken place ; but it is asserted, that they are not to be ascribed to the operation of evangelical principles and precepts. They are owing solely to the benign influence of a humane philosophy, and the gradual improvements of the human mind.*

* Whoever is in the least conversant in the writings, either of foreign philosophers or of our own, need not be informed

There is not, and cannot be, the smallest truth in this bold assertion, which is perfectly gratuitous, and unsupported by the slightest proof. But as it appears to me a matter of the very last importance to the honour and interest of our religion, that its claim to the sole, or at least to the principal, merit of having alleviated the miseries, and advanced the happiness, of mankind in the instances above adduced, should be fully and clearly made out, and established on the firmest ground, I must beg leave to subjoin the following observations.

It is incumbent on the philosophers of the present day, to show from whence they derive that humanity to which they now lay claim, and which, it seems, has produced such beneficial consequences. If they say, "From the cultivation of their minds, the improvement of their understanding, and the extent of their knowledge and erudition," it is, then, obvious to ask, how it comes to pass that these causes should not in ancient times have produced the same effects: how it comes to pass, that before the appearance of the Gospel, philosophy and humanity were perfect strangers

that this is their uniform doctrine; and that the beneficial effects of philosophy, and the miseries produced by Christianity, are their constant and favourite topics.

to each other, though they are now, it seems, such close and intimate friends? If we should only say, that "the philosophers of Greece and Italy were at least equal, both in natural sagacity and acquired learning, to the philosophers of modern Europe," we should not be thought to do the latter any great injustice. Yet not one of those great, and wise, and enlightened men of antiquity seems to have had any apprehension, that there was the least cruelty in a husband repudiating an irreproachable and affectionate wife from mere humour or caprice; in a father destroying his new-born infant, or putting his adult son to death; in a master torturing or murdering his servant for a trivial offence, or for none at all; in wretches being trained up to kill each other for the amusement of the spectators; in a victorious Prince oppressing and enslaving a whole country from mere avarice or ambition; in putting a great part of his prisoners to the sword, and enslaving all the rest; nor, lastly, when the magnitude of the occasion seemed to require it, in offering up human sacrifices to the gods. So far from expressing (as far as I am able to recollect) a just detestation of these horrid practices, there were several of the *most* eminent philosophers that expressly ap-

proved and recommended some of the worst of them. Aristotle particularly, and Plato, both gave a decided opinion in favour of destroying deformed or sickly infants.* We have already seen, that this execrable practice was even enjoined by Lycurgus ; yet the humane Plutarch sees nothing unjust in any of his laws, and considers him as a completely perfect character.† Thucydides relates the massacre of two thousand Helots by the Lacedæmonians in cold blood, and a multitude of other shocking barbarities, committed during the Peloponnesian war, without one word of censure or disapprobation ;‡ and Livy describes innumerable scenes of a similar nature, with the most perfect indifference and unconcern. Homer goes still further. He expressly approves and applauds the deliberate murder of all captives without distinction, even infants at the breast, and pronounces it to be

* ARISTOTLE, *Pol.* lib. vii., c. 16. PLATO *de Rep.*, lib. v. PLUT. *in Lyc.*

† He appeals to the general mildness and justice of Lycurgus's character, as a proof that he was not the author of the *Kpavria*. He tells us, that he was pronounced by the oracle "the beloved of god," and rather god than man, and that he was actually worshipped as a god by the Spartans. PLUT. *in Lyc.*

‡ THUCYD., lib. iv.

perfectly right and just.* And even Virgil, the tender, the elegant, and pathetic Virgil, he who, on other occasions, shows such exquisite feeling and sensibility, represents his hero as offering human sacrifices, without the smallest mark of horror or disgust;† and has not only selected the shocking punishment of the Alban dictator, as a proper and graceful ornament of the shield of Æneas, but has dwelt on the dreadful circumstances of it with an appearance of complacency and satisfaction, and seems even to exult in it, as a just retribution for the crime of the wretched sufferer.

At tu dictis, Albane, maneres.

Æneid. viii. 642.

It would be endless to enumerate instances of the same kind, which occur perpetually in the most distinguished writers of antiquity,‡

* *Iliad*. lib. vi., v. 62, αἵμα παρειπών. The poet seems even to have thought it an act of duty and of piety: for so the word αἵματος sometimes imports. See SCAPULA, HESYCHIUS, STEPHENS, &c.

† *Æn.* x. 518.; xi., 81. See also *Iliad*. xxiii., 175.

‡ Cicero applauds the twelve tables, though full of dreadful punishments, *De Orat.* i., 43, 44; and seems also, in some degree, to approve gladiatorial shows, while, at the same time, he relates one circumstance in these combats, which is enough to melt the most obdurate heart. *Mittunt etiam vulneribus confecti ad dominos qui quærant quid velint; si*

and which incontestably prove, that neither the brightest talents, nor the most successful cultivation of philosophy, of history, of eloquence, of poetry, of all those branches of literature which are properly called the *literæ humaniores*, and which are supposed to soften, and humanize, and meliorate the heart, could in any degree subdue the unyielding stubbornness of pagan cruelty. On the contrary, it would be no difficult task to show, that the more the ancients advanced in letters and the fine arts, and the more their communication and commerce with the different parts of the then known world was extended and enlarged, the more savage, oppressive, and tyrannical they became. And it is a fact no less remarkable, as well as a proof no less decisive of the doctrine I have been endeavouring to establish, that, on the discovery of the new world, the same astonishing phenomenon presented itself, that we have just been noticing in the old. In the very heart of South America, an empire appeared which had made advances in government, in policy, in many useful and many ornamental arts, far beyond what could

satisfactum iis non sit, se velle decumbere. Tusc. Quest. ii. 17. See also the extreme cruelty of the most humane characters in Terence. *Heautontim.* Act iv., sc. 1., v. 21.

have been expected without the use of letters, and infinitely beyond all the surrounding nations of that country. And it appeared also, that these polished Mexicans (for it is to those I allude) exceeded their neighbours the Peruvians, and all the other Indian kingdoms, in fierceness and in cruelty, as much as they surpassed them in all the conveniences and improvements of social and civilized life.

What shall we now say to the philosophy of the present age, which assumes to itself the exclusive merit of all the humanity and benevolence which are to be found in the world? and how shall we account for the striking contrast between the insensibility and hardheartedness of the ancient philosophers, and those professions of gentleness and philanthropy which their brethren in our own times so ostentatiously display in their writings and their discourses? The only adequate and assignable reason of the difference is, that the latter have a source to draw from, which was unknown to the former; that to the Gospel they are indebted for all their fine sentiments and declamations on the subject of benevolence; which, however, seem never to reach their hearts, or influence their conduct; for (as fatal experience has shown) the moment they

are possessed of power, they become the most inhuman of tyrants.*

2. Whoever considers, with any attention, the great leading principles and characteristic precepts of the Christian religion, will immediately perceive, that they are exactly such as would naturally produce (when not impeded by any accidental obstructions) those very effects which we ascribe to them. They seem to have been, as it were, purposely intended to meet and to correct all the violences and cruelties of Paganism, and more especially to afford protection and relief to the most oppressed and most helpless part of mankind, in all those instances where we have shown that power and authority were so grossly abused in the hands of the ancient Heathens. Husbands, for instance, are enjoined "to love their wives, and not to be bitter against them;" fathers are commanded "not to provoke their children to wrath, but to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." Masters are directed to "give their slaves what is just and equal;" sovereigns to consider themselves as "the ministers of God to men for good;" soldiers to "do

* Witness what passed in France in connexion with the Revolution. See also ROUSSEAU'S *Works*, 12mo. vol. viii., p. 10.

violence" (needless violence) "to no man;" and they, among others, are exhorted to "love even their enemies." Col. iii. 19; Eph. vi. 4; Col. iv. 1; Rom. xiii. 6; Luke iii. 14. The sacrifices required of us are not those of our fellow-creatures, but of our own irregular appetites and passions; and, in general, in all the various relations and connexions of civil and social life, we are commanded "to show all meekness unto all men;" "not to avenge ourselves, but rather give place unto wrath; to recompense to no man evil for evil; to be of one accord, of one mind, of one heart, and of one soul." Titus iii. 2; Rom. xii. 17—19; Phil. ii. 2.

These are evidently the sacred fountains from whence the various streams of benevolence, which, in Christian countries, now refresh and exhilarate the earth, have taken their rise.

And if our philosophers can show, that they have added one iota to the original stock of benevolence to be found in the Gospel, or advanced one single humane sentiment which is not either expressly or virtually comprehended in the Christian revelation, they may then be allowed to arrogate some praise to themselves on the score of their philanthropy. But till they can prove this, the claim of Christianity to all

those happy changes in the face of human affairs which have been here specified, stands unimpaired.

When our blessed Lord enjoined his disciples to love one another, he gave them what might well be called "a new commandment." Before that time we have seen, that, in many of the most essential articles of social life, the predominant principle and practice of mankind was to hate and devour one another. His was the first complete code of humanity that was ever given to the world. "The great royal law of charity," which this divine Legislator enacted, has never yet been improved upon by all the florid declamations of modern philosophers on the fashionable topic of benevolence. They can only, at the best, have the praise of ingenious and eloquent expositors: the true original text to which we owe every thing of this sort is the Gospel.

3. That this is a just and well-grounded conclusion will appear, beyond all doubt, from an appeal to history and to fact. We find, that besides the silent and gradual influence of Christianity on the minds and manners of men, the first efforts that were made, and the first laws that were enacted, to restrain and check, and in several instances to annihilate at once, some of

the most frightful inhumanities above-mentioned, were the acts of Christian Princes and Christian legislators.

With respect to paternal power, the first Christian Emperor, in order to prevent the destruction of grown children by their father, (a practice at that time too frequent,) very wisely and humanely ordained, that the public should maintain the children of those who were unable to provide for them.*

In the year 319 he put an effectual stop to this horrible practice by making it a capital offence, and even affixing to it the punishment denounced against parricides.†

The exposure of infants, however, still prevailed. This he also restrained by an edict, in the year 331 ; and under the Emperors Valentinian, Valens, and Gratian, this crime was made a capital offence.‡

Another branch of domestic tyranny—perpetual servitude—was, as a learned civilian observes, greatly discountenanced by the Christian religion ; and about the twelfth or thirteenth century, “ when ecclesiastical legislation was at its

* TAYLOR'S *Civil Law*, p. 406.

† *Ibid.*

‡ *Ibid.*, p. 406.

height, is dated the extinction of slavery in Europe."*

The first edict against gladiatorial shows was by a Christian Emperor; and Honorius afterwards completed what Constantine had begun. This horrid exhibition was by his laws finally abolished.†

To this we may add, that the savage punishment of crucifixion was also put an end to by Constantine.‡

In these instances (and more might be produced) we see that some of the greatest miseries which oppressed mankind in the heathen world were actually removed by the laws and edicts of Christian rulers.§ Here, then, there can be no

* TAYLOR, p. 435. Pope Alexander the Third declared, in the name of his Council, that all Christians ought to be exempt from servitude. That law alone (says an historian not much disposed to speak well of any Christian legislator) ought to render his name dear to all the people of the earth. VOLT., *Un. Hist.*, vol. xx., p. 266. Ed. Amst. 12mo. 1764.

† *History of the Decline of the Roman Empire*, vol. iii., p. 157. JORTIN'S *Eccles. Rem.*, vol. iii., p. 220.

‡ *Ibid.*, p. 219.

§ Even in the dark ages of Popery, the wars of contending Princes, and powerful Lords, were frequently checked, and the fierceness of the times greatly mitigated, by the authority, the remonstrances, and the influence of the Clergy; particularly by what was called "the truce of God," and other

doubt that the happy effects of these laws are to be ascribed solely and exclusively to the beneficent spirit of that heavenly religion, which meliorated the heart, and humanized the dispositions, of those who made them. And we are therefore warranted in concluding, that many of the other great improvements in civil, social, and domestic life, which render our situation so infinitely superior to that of the ancient as well as to the modern pagan world, are to be attributed to the operation of the same powerful cause.

If this important truth stood in need of any further confirmation, it is to be found in the confessions of those who are either the avowed enemies of Christianity, or at least have no unreasonable prejudices in its favour, to mislead their judgment.

They acknowledge, that "the pure and genuine influence of Christianity may be traced in its beneficial though imperfect effects on the barbarian proselytes of the north;" and that on the fall of the Roman empire, it evidently mollified the ferocious temper of the conquerors.*

benevolent devices of that nature. ROBERTSON'S *Charles V.*, vol. i., pp. 54, 64, 335, 336, 338.

* *Decline of the Roman Empire*, vol. iii., p. 633.

They acknowledge, that Constantine acted the part of a sound politician, in affording Christianity protection and support; because it not only tended to give firmness and solidity to his empire, but also to soften the ferocity of the armies, and to reform the licentiousness of the provinces; and by infusing a spirit of moderation and submission to government, to extinguish those principles of avarice and ambition, of injustice and violence, by which so many factions were formed, and the peace of the empire so often and so fatally broken.*

They acknowledge, in still more pointed and decisive terms, that no religion ever appeared in the world, whose natural tendency was so much directed to promote the peace and happiness of mankind.†

They acknowledge, that Christianity, divested of all fanaticism, and better understood than in former ages, has rendered modern government less sanguinary, and given more gentleness to the manners of mankind.

They acknowledge, in fine, that these changes are not owing to the cultivation of letters, because, wherever they flourished the most,

* BOLINGBROKE, vol. iv., p. 433.

† *Ibid.*, pp. 281, 282.

humanity was not the most regarded ; but that from the Gospel numberless acts of mercy and kindness take their rise.*

Such are the acknowledgments of men of distinguished eminence in the world of letters, but certainly not much disposed to make needless concessions in favour of Christianity. And with these unsuspecting testimonies, added to the various facts that have been produced, we are enabled to estimate the respective merits, and to delineate, in a few words, the true characters, of philosophy and of revelation.

We have seen that the predominant feature of Paganism, or what is now called "philosophy," (which is nothing more than Paganism without idolatry,) is cruelty in the extreme. All its steps are marked with blood. We have traced its ferocious temper in the civil policy, the laws, the domestic institutions, the wars, and even in the most solemn religious rites, of the ancient heathen world. This was the case even among the most learned and most philosophical nations of antiquity. But its aspect was still more

* ROUSSEAU, *Emile*, tom. iii., lib. 4. 12mo. Frank. P. 102. It is admirably well said by the same writer, *La philosophie ne peut faire aucun bien, que la religion ne le fasse encore mieux : et la religion en fait beaucoup que la philosophie ne sauroit faire.*— *Ibid.* p. 101.

dreadful among those whom they called barbarians; and it remains no less so among the savages of the present day, of which their cruelty to their women, their sanguinary and vindictive wars, the tortures they inflict on their prisoners, and their human sacrifices, are but too convincing proofs. In one of the most powerful kingdoms of Africa, where human sacrifices are sometimes offered, the object of their Princes' worship is a tiger;* a deity well suited to the worshippers, and a very fit emblem of the temper and disposition of Paganism. The whole countenance, indeed, of that religion is so strongly impressed with the features of that malignant being from whom it springs, that it is impossible to mistake its origin. It can have no other parent, than the parent of all evil, the prince of darkness.

In the religion of Christ, on the other hand, we see a directly contrary spirit; a spirit of meekness, mercy, gentleness, humanity, and kindness, which has been for more than eighteen hundred years contending with the evils generated by Paganism, has actually banished some of them from the face of the earth, has greatly

* See MR. NORRIS'S *Evidence on the Slave Trade, before the Privy Council*, p. 5.

mitigated and softened others, is gradually undermining all the rest, and has already given so different a colour to the whole system of human affairs, has introduced so large a portion of benevolence and mutual good-will into the minds and manners of men, into all the various relations of social, civil, and domestic life, as plainly shows the sacred source from whence it springs. Philosophy (both ancient and modern) is cruel, and could not be the author of such blessings as these. There could be but one author of them, —the God of all consolation and joy.

So stands the comparison between philosophy and the Gospel. And if, after all the proofs above adduced, any one should still affect to think that the portraits here drawn of them are the mere fictions of imagination, there is one means of conviction still remaining, which at this very hour forces itself on our observations, which in speaking on this subject it is impossible to pass over unnoticed, and which it will not be easy for the most determined incredulity to withstand. Let the man who entertains these doubts (if such a one there can be) cast his eyes for a moment on each side of the narrow strait which separates two of the greatest and most powerful nations in Europe. In one of these, philosophy has

usurped the throne of God ; in the other Christianity has long established its empire. And it should seem as if (among other reasons) Providence had permitted the former to triumph in a kingdom so near our own, almost on purpose to contrast together, to show in the strongest possible light, and to force upon the very senses of mankind, the different spirit and the different effects of infidelity and religion. The scenes that have lately passed in one of these countries are well known. They are too horrible to relate, and too recent to be forgotten. The blessings experienced in the other are before our eyes, and I trust engraved on all our hearts. After contemplating both with due attention, let us then say, whether “the tree” (planted on each of these neighbouring shores) is not “known by its fruit,” Matt. xii. 33 : whether the fruit of philosophy is not now, what it always has been, unrelenting cruelty ; and the fruit of the Gospel, unbounded benevolence and universal love. Here, then, are the two great moral teachers and guides of life proposed to your choice ; and as you approve the temper, and relish the actual effects, of the one, or of the other, decide between them.

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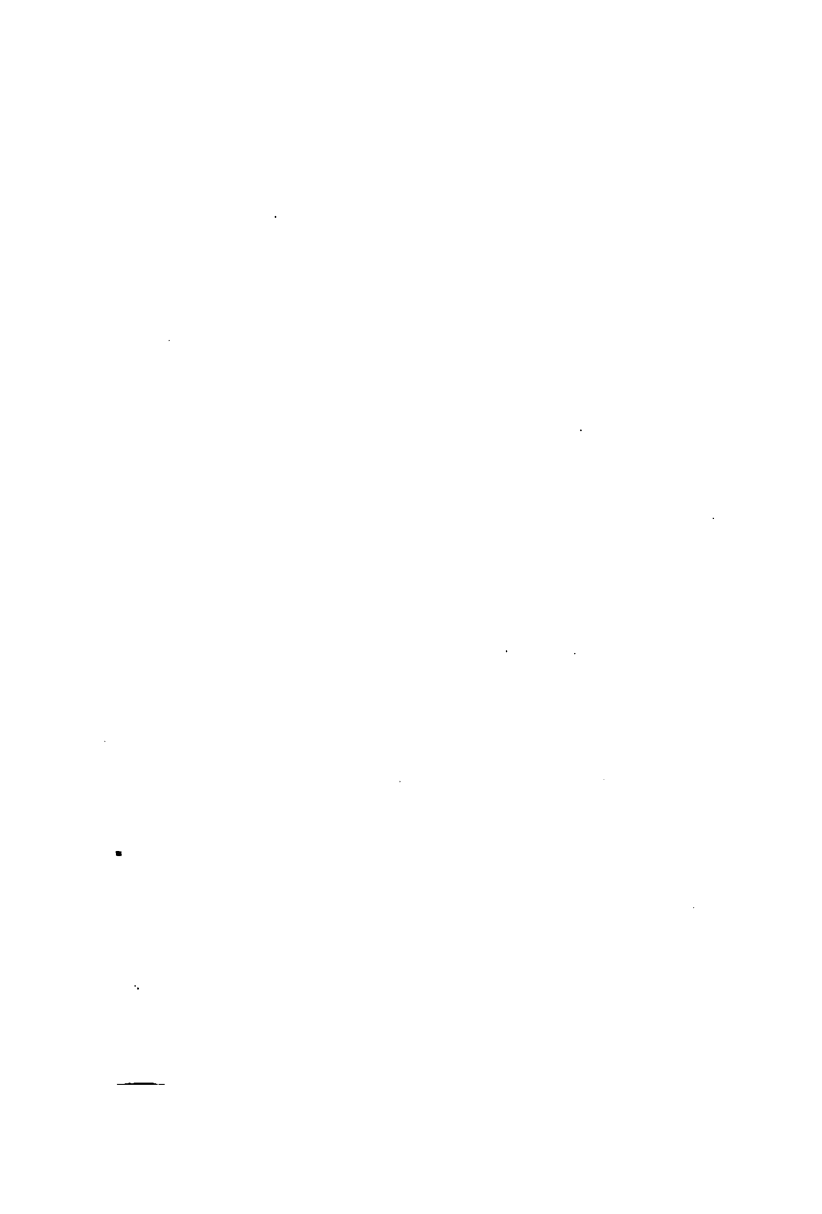
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A SUMMARY
OF
THE PRINCIPAL EVIDENCES
FOR THE
TRUTH AND DIVINE ORIGIN
OF THE
CHRISTIAN REVELATION.

BY BEILBY PORTEUS, D.D.,
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ON
THE TRUTH AND DIVINE ORIGIN
OF THE
CHRISTIAN REVELATION.

THE method I intend to pursue in this treatise is, to present to my readers the following series of propositions, and then to prove distinctly the truth of each.

I. From considering the state of the heathen world, before the appearance of our Lord upon earth, it is evident that there was an absolute necessity for a revelation of God's will, and, of course, a great probability beforehand that such a revelation would be granted.

II. At the very time when there was a general expectation in the world of some extraordinary personage making his appearance in it, a person called Jesus Christ did actually appear upon earth, asserting that he was the Son of God, and that he was sent from heaven to teach mankind

true religion ; and he did accordingly found a religion, which from him was called “the Christian religion,” and which has been professed by great numbers of people from that time to the present.

III. The books of the New Testament were written by those persons to whom they are ascribed, and contain a faithful history of Christ and his religion ; and the account there given of both may be securely relied upon as strictly true.

IV. The Scriptures of the Old Testament (which are connected with those of the New) are the genuine writings of those whose names they bear ; and give a true account of the Mosaic dispensation, of the historical facts, the divine commands, the moral precepts, and the prophecies which they contain.

V. The character of Christ, as represented in the Gospels, affords very strong ground for believing that he was a divine person.

VI. The sublimity of his doctrines, and the purity of his moral precepts, confirm this belief.

VII. The rapid and successful propagation of the Gospel by the first teachers of it, through a large part of the world, is a proof that they were favoured with divine assistance and support.

VIII. A comparison betwixt Christ and

Mahomet, and their respective religions, leads us to conclude, that as the religion of the latter was confessedly the invention of man, that of the former was derived from God.

IX. The predictions delivered by the ancient Prophets, and fulfilled in our Saviour, show that he was the Messiah expected by the Jews, and that he came into the world, by divine appointment, to be the great Deliverer and Redeemer of mankind.

X. The prophecies delivered by our Saviour himself prove, that he was endued with the foreknowledge of future events, which belongs only to God and to those inspired by him.

XI. The miracles performed by our Lord demonstrate him to have possessed divine power.

XII. The resurrection of our Lord from the dead is a fact fully proved by the clearest evidence, and is the seal and confirmation of his divinity, and of the truth of his religion.

These are the several points I shall undertake to prove in the following pages: and if these are clearly made out, there can be nothing more wanting to satisfy every reasonable man, that the Christian religion is a true revelation from God.

PROPOSITION I.

FROM CONSIDERING THE STATE OF THE HEATHEN WORLD, BEFORE THE APPEARANCE OF OUR LORD UPON EARTH, IT IS EVIDENT THAT THERE WAS AN ABSOLUTE NECESSITY FOR A DIVINE REVELATION OF GOD'S WILL, AND, OF COURSE, A GREAT PROBABILITY BEFOREHAND THAT SUCH A REVELATION WOULD BE GRANTED.

THEY who are acquainted with ancient history know perfectly well that there is no one fact more certain and more notorious than this,—that for many ages before our Saviour appeared upon earth, and at the time he actually did appear, the whole heathen world, even the politest, and most civilized, and most learned nations, were, with a very few exceptions, sunk in the most deplorable ignorance of every thing relating to God and to religion ; in the grossest superstition and idolatry, and in the most abominable corruption and depravity of manners. They neither understood the true nature of God, nor the attributes and perfections which belong to him, nor the worship that was acceptable to him, nor the moral duties which he required from his creatures ; nor had they any

clear notions or firm belief of the immortality of the soul, and a state of rewards and punishments in another life. They believed the world to be under the direction of a vast multitude of gods and goddesses, to whom they ascribed the worst passions and the worst vices that ever disgraced human nature. They worshipped also dead men and women, birds and beasts, insects and reptiles, (especially that most odious and disgusting reptile, the serpent,) together with an infinite number of idols, the work of their own hands, from various materials, gold, silver, wood, and stone. With respect to their own conduct, they were almost universally addicted to the most shocking and abominable vices; even many of their solemn and religious ceremonies and acts of devotion were scenes of the grossest sensuality and licentiousness. Others of them were attended with the most savage and cruel superstitions, and sometimes even with human sacrifices.

The description given of the ancient Pagans by St. Paul, in the first chapter of his Epistle to the Romans, is strictly and literally true: "They were filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, uncleanness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate,

deceit, malignity ; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things ; disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant-breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful."

These are not the mere general declamations of a pious man against the wickedness of the times ; they are faithful and exact pictures of the manners of the age, and they are fully and amply confirmed by contemporary heathen writers. They are applied also to a people, highly civilized, ingenious, learned, and celebrated for their proficiency in all liberal arts and sciences. What, then, must have been the depravity of the most barbarous nations, when such were the morals of the most polite and virtuous ?

There were, it is true, among all the ancient nations, and especially among the Greeks and Romans, some wise and comparatively good men, called philosophers, who had juster notions of morality and religion than the rest of the world, and preserved themselves to a certain degree unpolluted by the general corruption of the times. But these were few in proportion to the great bulk of mankind, and were utterly unable to produce any considerable change in *the prevailing principles and manners of their*

countrymen. They themselves had but very imperfect and erroneous notions respecting the nature and attributes of God, the worship he required, the duties and obligations of morality, the method of God's governing the world, his design in creating mankind, the original dignity of human nature, the state of corruption and depravity into which it afterwards fell ; the particular mode of divine interposition necessary for the recovery of the human race ; the means of regaining the favour of their offended Maker, and the glorious end to which God intended finally to conduct them. Even with respect to those great and important doctrines above-mentioned, the immortality of the soul, the reality of a future state, and the distribution of rewards and punishments hereafter, they were full of doubt, uncertainty, and hesitation ; and rather ardently wished and hoped for, than confidently expected and believed them. But even what they did know with any degree of clearness and certainty, they either would not condescend, or wanted the ability, to render plain and intelligible to the lower orders of the people. They were destitute also of proper authority to enforce the virtues they recommended ; they had no motives to propose powerful enough to overrule

strong temptations and corrupt inclinations : their own example, instead of recommending their precepts, tended to counteract them ; for it was generally (even in the very best of them) in direct opposition to their doctrines ; and the detestable vices to which many of them were addicted, entirely destroyed the efficacy of what they taught.

Above all, they were destitute of those awful sanctions of religion, which are the most effectual restraints on the passions and vices of mankind, and the most powerful incentives to virtue,—the rewards and punishments of a future state ; which form so essential and important a part of the Christian dispensation.

There was therefore a plain and absolute necessity for a divine revelation, to rescue mankind from that gulf of ignorance, superstition, idolatry, wickedness, and misery, in which they were almost universally sunk ; to teach them in what manner, and with what kind of external service, God might most acceptably be worshipped, and what expiation he would accept for sin ; to give them a full assurance of a future state and a future judgment ; to make the whole doctrine of religion clear and obvious to all capacities ; to add weight and authority to the plainest pre-

cepts ; and to furnish men with extraordinary and supernatural assistance, to enable them to overcome the corruptions of their nature. And since it was also plainly worthy of God, and consonant to all our ideas of his goodness, mercy, and compassion, to the work of his own hands, that he should thus enlighten, and assist, and direct the creatures he had made, there was evidently much ground to expect that such information and assistance would be granted ; and the wisest of the ancient Heathens themselves thought it most natural and agreeable to right reason to hope for something of this nature.

“You may give over,” says Socrates, “all hopes of amending men’s manners for the future, unless God be pleased to send you some other person to instruct you ;” * and Plato declares, that “whatever is right, and as it should be, in the present evil state of the world, can be so only by the particular interposition of God.” † Cicero has made similar declarations ; and Porphyry, who was a most inveterate enemy to the Christian religion, yet confesses, that there was wanting some universal method of deliver-

* PLATO in *Apolog. Socratis*.

† PLATO de Rep.

ing men's souls, which no sect of philosophy had ever yet found out.*

These confessions of the great sages of antiquity infinitely outweigh the assertions of our modern infidels, "that human reason is fully sufficient to teach man his duty, and enable him to perform it; and that, therefore, a divine revelation was perfectly needless." It is true, that in the present times, a Deist may have tolerably just notions of the nature and attributes of the supreme Being, of the worship due to him, of the ground and extent of moral obligation, and even of a future state of retribution. But from whence does he derive these notions? Not from the dictates of his own unassisted reason, but (as the philosophist Rousseau himself confesses†) from those very Scriptures which he despises and reviles, from the early impressions of education, from living and conversing in a Christian country, where those doctrines are publicly taught, and where, in spite of himself, he imbibes some portion of that religious knowledge which the sacred writings have every where diffused and communicated to

* AUGUSTIN. *de Civitate Dei*, lib. x., c. 32.

† Vol. ix., p. 71. 12mo. 1764.

the enemies as well as the friends of the Gospel. But they who were destitute of these advantages, they who had nothing but reason to direct them, and therefore knew what reason is capable of doing, when left to itself, much better than any modern infidel, who never was, and never can be, precisely in the same predicament;—these men uniformly declare, that the mere light of nature was not competent to conduct them into the road of happiness and virtue; and that the only sure and certain guide to carry men well through this life, was a divine discovery of the truth.* These considerations may serve to show, that, instead of entertaining any unreasonable prejudices beforehand against the possibility or probability of any divine revelation whatever, we ought, on the contrary, to be previously prepossessed in favour of it, and to be prepared and open to receive it with candour and fairness, whenever it should come supported with sufficient evidence; because, from considering the wants of man and the mercy of God, it appears highly probable that such a revelation would some time or other be vouchsafed to mankind.

* PLATO in *Phadone*.

PROPOSITION II.

AT THE VERY TIME WHEN THERE WAS A GENERAL EXPECTATION IN THE WORLD OF SOME EXTRAORDINARY PERSONAGE MAKING HIS APPEARANCE IN IT, A PERSON CALLED JESUS CHRIST DID ACTUALLY APPEAR UPON EARTH, ASSERTING THAT HE WAS THE SON OF GOD, AND THAT HE CAME FROM HEAVEN TO TEACH MANKIND TRUE RELIGION; AND HE DID ACCORDINGLY FOUND A RELIGION, WHICH FROM HIM WAS CALLED THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION, AND WHICH HAS BEEN PROFESSED BY GREAT NUMBERS OF PEOPLE FROM THAT TIME TO THE PRESENT.

It was necessary just to state this proposition as the foundation of all the reasoning that is to follow; but the truth of it is so universally acknowledged, that it requires but very few words to be said in support of it.

That there was, about the time of our Saviour's birth, a general expectation spread over the eastern part of the world, that some very extraordinary person would appear in Judæa, is evident both from the sacred history and from pagan writers. St. Matthew informs us, that when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judæa, there came wise men (probably men of considerable rank and learning in their own country) *from the east*, saying, "Where is he that is

born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him." In confirmation of this, two Roman historians, Suetonius and Tacitus, assert, that there prevailed at that time, over the whole east, an ancient and fixed opinion, that there should arise out of Judæa a person who should obtain dominion over the world.

That at this time, when Augustus Cæsar was Emperor of Rome, a person called Jesus Christ was actually born in Judæa; that he professed to come from heaven to teach mankind true religion; and that he had a multitude of followers; the sacred historians unanimously affirm, and several heathen authors also bear testimony to the same facts. They mention the very name of Christ; and acknowledge that he had a great number of disciples, who from him were called Christians. The Jews, though professed enemies to our religion, acknowledge these things to be true; and none even of the earliest Pagans who wrote against Christianity ever pretended to question their reality. These things, therefore, are as certain and undeniable as ancient history, both sacred and profane, and the concurrent testimony both of friends and enemies, can possibly make them.

PROPOSITION III.

THE BOOKS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT WERE WRITTEN BY THOSE PERSONS TO WHOM THEY ARE ASCRIBED, AND CONTAIN A FAITHFUL HISTORY OF CHRIST AND HIS RELIGION ; AND THE ACCOUNT THERE GIVEN OF BOTH MAY BE SECURELY RELIED UPON AS STRICTLY TRUE.

THE books which contain the history of Christ and of the Christian religion are the four Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles. That the Gospels were written by the persons whose names they bear, namely, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, there is no more reason to doubt, than that the histories which we have under the names of Xenophon, Livy, or Tacitus, were written by those authors.

A great many passages are alluded to or quoted from the Evangelists, exactly as we read them now, by a regular succession of Christian writers, from the time of the Apostles down to this hour ; and at a very early period their names are mentioned as the authors of their respective Gospels ; which is more than can be said for any other ancient historian whatever.*

* LARDNER'S *Credibility*, b. i. ; and PALEY'S *Evidences* vol. i.

These books have always been considered by the whole Christian world, from the apostolic age, as containing a faithful history of their religion, and therefore they ought to be received as such ; just as we allow the Koran to contain a genuine account of the Mahometan religion, and the sacred books of the Brahmins to contain a true representation of the Hindoo religion.

That all the facts related in these writings, and the accounts given of every thing our Saviour said and did, are also strictly true, we have the most substantial grounds for believing :

For, in the first place, the writers had the very best means of information, and could not possibly be deceived themselves.

And, in the next place, they could have no conceivable inducement for imposing upon others.

St. Matthew and St. John were two of our Lord's Apostles ; his constant companions and attendants throughout the whole of his ministry. They were actually present at the scenes which they describe ; eye-witnesses of the facts, and ear-witnesses of the discourses, which they relate.


St. Mark and St. Luke, though not them-

selves Apostles, yet were the contemporaries and companions of Apostles, and in habits of society and friendship with those who had been present at the transactions which they record. St. Luke expressly says this in the beginning of his Gospel, which opens with these words: "Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed amongst us: even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eye-witnesses and ministers of the word, it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee, in order, most excellent Theophilus, that thou mightest know the certainty of those things wherein thou hast been instructed." St. Luke also being the author of the Acts of the Apostles, we have, for the writers of these five books, persons who had the most perfect knowledge of every thing they relate, either from their own personal observation, or from immediate communications with those who saw and heard every thing that passed.

They could not, therefore, be themselves deceived: nor could they have the least inducement, or the least inclination, to deceive others.

They were plain, honest, artless, unlearned

men, in very humble occupations of life, and utterly incapable of inventing or carrying on such a refined and complicated system of fraud, as the Christian religion must have been if it was not true. There are, besides, the strongest marks of fairness, candour, simplicity, and truth, throughout the whole of their narratives. Their greatest enemies have never attempted to throw the least stain upon their characters; and how then can they be supposed capable of so gross an imposition as that of asserting and propagating the most impudent fictions? They could gain by it neither pleasure, profit, nor power. On the contrary, it brought upon them the most dreadful evils, and even death itself. If, therefore, they were cheats, they were cheats without any motive, and without any advantage; nay, contrary to every motive and every advantage that usually influence the actions of men. They preached a religion which forbids falsehood under pain of eternal punishment, and yet, on this supposition, they supported that religion by falsehood; and whilst they were guilty of the basest and most useless knavery themselves, they were taking infinite pains, and going through the greatest labour and sufferings, in order to teach honesty to all mankind.



Is this credible? Is this possible? Is not this a mode of acting so contrary to all experience, to all the principles of human nature, and to all the usual motives of human conduct, as to exceed the utmost bounds of belief, and to compel every reasonable man to reject at once so monstrous a supposition?

The facts, therefore, related in the Gospels, and in the Acts of the Apostles, even those evidently miraculous, must be true; for the testimony of those who die for what they assert, is evidence sufficient to support any miracle whatever. And this opinion of their veracity is strongly confirmed by the following considerations.

There are, in all the sacred writings of the New Testament, continual allusions and references to things, persons, places, manners, customs, and opinions, which are found to be perfectly conformable to the real state of things, at that time, as represented by disinterested and contemporary writers. Had their story been a forgery, they would certainly have been detected in some mistake or other, concerning these incidental circumstances, which yet they have never once been.

Then, as to the facts themselves which they

relate, great numbers of them are mentioned and related both by Jewish and Roman historians; such as the star that appeared at our Saviour's birth, the journey of the wise men to Bethlehem, Herod's murder of the infants under two years old, many particulars concerning John the Baptist and Herod, the crucifixion of our Lord under Pontius Pilate, and the earthquake and miraculous darkness which attended it. Nay, even many of the miracles which Jesus himself wrought, particularly the curing the lame and blind, and casting out devils, are, as to the matters of fact, expressly owned and admitted, by several of the earliest and most implacable enemies of Christianity. For though they ascribed these miracles to the assistance of evil spirits, yet they allowed that the miracles themselves were actually wrought.*

This testimony of our adversaries, even to the miraculous parts of the sacred history, is the strongest possible confirmation of the truth and authority of the whole.

It is also certain, that the books of the New Testament have come down to the present times without any material alteration or corruption and that they are, in all essential points, the

* CLARKE'S *Evidences of Nat. and Rev. Religion.*

same as they came from the hands of their authors.

That in the various transcripts of these writings, as in all other ancient books, a few letters, syllables, or even words, may have been changed, we do not pretend to deny; but that there has been any designed or fraudulent corruption of any considerable part, especially of any doctrine or any important passage of history, no one has ever attempted, or been able, to prove. Indeed it was absolutely impossible. There can be no doubt but that, as soon as any of the original writings came out of the hands of their authors, great numbers of copies were immediately taken and sent to all the different Christian churches. We know that they were publicly read in the religious assemblies of the first Christians. We know also that they were very soon translated into a variety of foreign languages, and these ancient versions (many of which still remain) were quickly dispersed into all parts of the known world; nay, even several of the original manuscripts remained to the time of Tertullian, at the end of the second century.* There are numberless quotations from every part of the New Testament by Christian writers, from the

* GROTIUS *de Ver.*, lib., iii., sec. 2.

earliest ages down to the present, all which substantially agree with the present text of the sacred writings. Besides which, a variety of sects and heresies soon arose in the Christian church, and each of these appealed to the Scriptures for the truth of their doctrines. It would, therefore, have been utterly impossible for any one sect to have made any material alteration in the sacred books, without being immediately detected and exposed by all the others.* Their mutual jealousy and suspicion of each other would effectually prevent any gross adulteration of the sacred volumes; and with respect to lesser matters, the best and most able critics have, after the most minute examination, asserted and proved, that the holy Scriptures of the New Testament have suffered less from the injury of time, and the errors of transcribers, than any other ancient writings whatsoever.†

* BEATTIE, vol i., p. 188.

† "The style, too, of the Gospel," says the amiable and elegant author of the *Minstrel*, "bears intrinsic evidence of its truth. We find there no appearance of artifice or of party spirit; no attempt to exaggerate on the one hand, or depreciate on the other; no remarks thrown in to anticipate objections, nothing of that caution which never fails to distinguish the testimony of those who are conscious of imposture; no endeavour to reconcile the reader's mind to what may be extraordinary in the narrative; all is fair,

PROPOSITION IV.

THE SCRIPTURES OF THE OLD TESTAMENT, WHICH ARE CONNECTED WITH THOSE OF THE NEW, ARE THE GENUINE WRITINGS OF THOSE WHOSE NAMES THEY BEAR, AND GIVE A TRUE ACCOUNT OF THE MOSAIC DISPENSATION, AS WELL AS OF THE HISTORICAL FACTS, THE DIVINE COMMANDS, THE MORAL PRECEPTS, AND THE PROPHECIES WHICH THEY CONTAIN.

THAT part of the Bible which is called the Old Testament contains a great variety of very different compositions, some historical, some poetical, some moral and preceptive, some prophetical; written at different times, and by different persons, and collected into one volume by the care of the Jews.

That these books were all written by those whose names they bear, there is not the least reasonable ground to doubt: they have been always considered as the writings of those persons by the whole Jewish nation, (who were

candid, and simple. The historians make no reflections of their own, but confine themselves to matter of fact, that is, to what they heard and saw, and honestly record their own mistakes and faults, as well as the other particulars of the story." BEATTIE'S *Evidences*, vol. i., p. 89.

most interested in their authenticity, and most likely to know the truth,) from the earliest times down to the present ; and no proof to the contrary has ever yet been produced.

That these writings have come down to us in the same state in which they were originally written, as to all essential points, there is every reason to believe. The original manuscripts were long preserved among the Jews. A copy of the book of the law was preserved in the ark ; it was ordered to be read publicly every seven years, at the feast of the tabernacles, as well as privately, and frequently, in every Jewish family.

There is a copy still extant of the five books of Moses (which are called the Pentateuch) taken by the Samaritans, who were bitter enemies to the Jews, and always at variance with them ; and this copy agrees, in every material instance, with the Jewish copy.

Near three hundred years before Christ, these Scriptures were translated into Greek ; and this version (called the Septuagint) agrees also in all essential articles with the Hebrew original. This being very widely spread over the world, rendered any considerable alteration extremely difficult ; and the dispersion of the Jews into all

the different regions of the globe, made it next to impossible.

The Jews were always remarkable for being most faithful guardians of their sacred books, which they transcribed repeatedly, and compared most carefully with the originals, and of which they even numbered the words and letters. That they have not corrupted any of their prophetic writings, appears from hence,—that we prove Jesus to be the Messiah from many of those very prophecies which they have themselves preserved ; and which (if their invincible fidelity to their sacred books had not restrained them) their hatred to Christianity would have led them to alter or to suppress. And their credit is still further established by this circumstance, that our Saviour, though he brings many heavy charges against the scribes and pharisees, yet never once accuses them of corrupting or falsifying any one of their sacred writings.

It is no less certain that these writings give a true and faithful account of the various matters which they contain. Many of the principal facts and circumstances related in them are mentioned by the most ancient heathen authors. The first origin and creation of the world out of chaos, as described by Moses ; the formation of

the sun, the moon, and the stars, and afterwards of man himself; the dominion given him over other animals; the completion of this great work in six days; the destruction of the world by a deluge; the circumstances of the ark and the dove; the punishment of Sodom by fire; the ancient rite of circumcision; many particulars relating to Moses, the giving of the law, and the Jewish ritual; the names of David and Solomon, and their leagues with the Tyrians; these things, and many others of the same sort, are expressly mentioned, or plainly alluded to, in several pagan authors of the highest antiquity and the best credit. And a very bitter enemy of the Jews, as well as Christians, the Emperor Julian, is, by the force of evidence, compelled to confess, that there were many persons among the Jews divinely inspired; and that fire from heaven descended on the sacrifices of Moses and Elijah. Add to this, that the references made to the books of the Old Testament, and the passages quoted from them by our Saviour and his Apostles, is a plain proof, that they acknowledged the authority of those writings, and the veracity of their authors.

It is true indeed, that in the historical books of the Old Testament, there are some bad cha-

racters and bad actions recorded, and some very cruel deeds described; but these things are mentioned as mere historical facts, and by no means approved or proposed as examples to others. And excepting these passages, which are comparatively few in number, the rest of those sacred books, more especially Deuteronomy, the Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Prophets, are full of very sublime representations of God and his attributes; of very excellent rules for the conduct of life, and examples of almost every virtue that can adorn human nature. And these things were written at a time when all the rest of the world, even the wisest and most learned and most celebrated nations of the earth, were sunk in the grossest ignorance of God and religion; were worshipping idols and brute-beasts, and indulging themselves in the most abominable vices. It is a most singular circumstance, that a people in a remote obscure corner of the world, very inferior to several heathen nations in learning, in philosophy, in genius, in science, and all the polite arts, should yet be so infinitely their superiors in their ideas of the supreme Being, and in every thing relating to morality and religion. *This can no otherwise be accounted for, than on*

the supposition of their having been instructed in these things by God himself, or by persons commissioned and inspired by him ; that is, of their having been really favoured with those divine revelations which are recorded in the books of the Old Testament.

With respect to the prophecies which they contain, the truth of a great part of these has been infallibly proved by the exact fulfilment of them in subsequent ages, such as those relating to our Saviour, (which will be hereafter specified,) to Babylon, to Egypt, to Edom, to Tyre and Sidon. But those which refer more particularly to the dispersion of the Jews are so very numerous and clear, and the accomplishment of them, in the present state of the Jews, is a fact which obtrudes itself, at this moment, so irresistibly upon our senses, that I cannot forbear presenting to the reader some of the most remarkable of those predictions, as they are drawn together by a most able writer.

It was foretold by Moses, that when the Jews forsook the true God, "they should be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth ; should be scattered among the Heathen, among all people, from the one end of the earth even unto the other ; should become an astonishment, a pro-

verb, and a bye-word among all nations ; and that among those nations they should find no ease, neither should the sole of their foot have rest ; but the Lord should give them a trembling heart, and fading of eyes, and sorrow of mind, and send a faintness into their hearts in the land of their enemies ; so that the sound of a shaken leaf should chase them." Deut. xxviii. 25 ; Lev. xxvi. 33 ; Deut. iv. 27 ; xxviii. 64 ; xxviii. 37 ; xxviii. 65 ; Lev. xxvi. 36.

The same things are continually predicted through all the following Prophets : " That God would disperse them through the countries of the Heathen ; that he would sift them among all nations, like as corn is sifted in a sieve ; that in all the kingdoms of the earth, whither they should be driven, they should be a reproach and a proverb, a taunt and a curse, and an astonishment and a hissing ; and that they should abide many days without a King, and without a Prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and without teraphim." Ezek. xx. 23 ; xi. 15 ; Amos ix. 9 ; Jer. xxiv. 9 ; xxix. 18 ; Hosea iii. 4.

Had any thing like this, in the time of Moses or of the Prophets, ever happened to any nation *in the world* ? Or was there in nature any pro-

bability that any such thing should ever happen to any people? that when they were conquered by their enemies, and led into captivity, they should neither continue in the place of their captivity, nor be swallowed up and lost among their conquerors, but be scattered among all the nations of the world, and hated and persecuted by all nations for many ages, and yet continue a distinct people? Or could any description of the Jews, written at this day, be a more exact and lively picture of the state they have now been in for many ages, than these prophetic descriptions, especially that of Moses, given more than three thousand years ago?*

PROPOSITION V.

THE CHARACTER OF CHRIST, AS REPRESENTED IN THE GOSPELS, AFFORDS VERY STRONG GROUND FOR BELIEVING THAT HE WAS A DIVINE PERSON.

WHOEVER considers with attention the character of our blessed Lord, as it may be collected

* CLARKE'S *Evidences*, pp. 176, 277.

from the various incidents and actions of his life, (for there are no laboured descriptions of it, no encomiums upon it, by his own disciples,) will soon discover that it was, in every respect, the most perfect that ever was made known to mankind. If we only say of him what even Pilate said of him, and what his bitterest enemies cannot and do not deny, that we can find no fault in him, and that the whole tenor of his life was entirely blameless throughout, this is more than can be said of any other person that ever came into the world. But this is going a very little way indeed in the excellence of his character. He was not only free from every failing, but possessed and practised every imaginable virtue. Towards his heavenly Father he expressed the most ardent love, the most fervent yet rational devotion, and displayed in his whole conduct the most absolute resignation to his will and obedience to his commands. His manners were gentle, mild, condescending, and gracious : his heart overflowed with kindness, compassion, and tenderness to the whole human race. The great employment of his life was to do good to the bodies and souls of men. In this all his thoughts and all his time were constantly and *almost* incessantly occupied. He went about

dispensing his blessings to all around him in a thousand different ways ; healing diseases, relieving infirmities, correcting errors, removing prejudices, promoting piety, justice, charity, peace, harmony among men, and crowding into the narrow compass of his ministry more acts of mercy and compassion than the longest life of the most benevolent man upon earth ever yet produced. Over his own passions he possessed the most complete command ; and though his patience was continually put to the severest trials, yet he was never once overcome, never once betrayed into any intemperance or excess in word or deed, "never once spake unadvisedly with his lips." He endured the cruellest insults from his enemies with the utmost composure, meekness, patience, and resignation ; displayed the most astonishing fortitude under a most painful and ignominious death ; and, to crown all, in the very midst of his torments on the cross, implored forgiveness for his murderers in that divinely charitable prayer, "Father, forgive them ; for they know not what they do."

Nor was his wisdom inferior to his virtues. The doctrines he taught were the most sublime and the most important that were ever before delivered to mankind, and every way worthy of that God

from whom he professed to derive them, and whose Son he declared himself to be.

His precepts inculcated the purest and most perfect morality ; his discourses were full of dignity and wisdom, yet intelligible and clear ; his parables conveyed instruction in the most pleasing, familiar, and impressive manner ; and his answers to the many insidious questions that were put to him, showed uncommon quickness of conception, soundness of judgment, and presence of mind, completely baffled all the artifices and malice of his enemies, and enabled him to elude all the snares that were laid for him. It appears then, even from this short and imperfect sketch of our Saviour's character, that he was, beyond comparison, the wisest and most virtuous person that ever appeared ; and even his bitterest enemies allow that he was so. If, then, he was confessedly so great and so good a man, it unavoidably follows that he must be what he pretended to be, a divine person, and of course his religion also must be divine : for he certainly laid claim to a divine original. He asserted, that he was the Son of God ; that he and his religion came from heaven ; and that he had the power of working miracles. If this was not the case, he must, in a matter of *infinite* importance, have asserted what had no

foundation in truth. But is such a supposition as this in the smallest degree credible? Is it probable, is it conceivable, is it consistent with the general conduct of man, is it reconcilable with the acknowledged character of our Lord, to suppose, that any thing but truth could proceed from him whom his very enemies allow to have been in every respect, and of course in point of veracity, the best and most virtuous of men? Was it ever known, is there a single instance to be produced in the history of mankind, of any one so unblemished in morals as Christ confessedly was, persisting, for so great a length of time as he did, in assertions, which, if untrue, would be repugnant to the clearest principles of morality, and most fatal in their consequences to those he loved best, his followers and his friends? Is it possible, that the pure, the upright, the pious, the devout, the meek, the gentle, the humane, the merciful Jesus, could engage multitudes of innocent and virtuous people in the belief and support of a religion which he knew must draw on them persecution, misery, and death, unless he had been authorized by God himself to establish that religion; and unless he was conscious that he possessed the power of amply recompensing those who preferred his religion to every

other consideration ? The common sense and common feelings of mankind must revolt at such a preposterous idea.

It follows, then, that Christ was, in truth, a divine teacher, and his religion the gift of God.

PROPOSITION VI.

THE SUBLIMITY OF OUR LORD'S DOCTRINES, AND THE PURITY OF HIS MORAL PRECEPTS, CONFIRM THE BELIEF OF HIS DIVINE MISSION.

THERE is nowhere to be found such important information, and such just and noble sentiments, concerning God and religion, as in the Scriptures of the New Testament.

They teach us, in the first place, that there is one Almighty Being, who created all things, of infinite power, wisdom, justice, mercy, goodness ; that he is the Governor and Preserver of this world, which he has made ; that his providential care is over all his works ; and that he more particularly regards the affairs and conduct of men. They teach us, that we are to worship this great Being in spirit and in truth ; and that the love of him is the first and great commandment, the source and spring of all virtue. They teach us

more particularly how to pray to him, and for that purpose supply us with a form of prayer, called "the Lord's prayer," "which is a model of calm and rational devotion, and which for its conciseness, its clearness, its suitableness to every condition, and for the weight, solemnity, and real importance of its petitions, is without an equal or a rival."* They teach us, moreover, what we all feel to be true, that the human heart is weak and corrupt ; that man is fallen from his original innocence ; that he is restored, however, to the favour of God, and the capacity of happiness, by the death and mediation and atonement of Christ, who is the way, the truth, and the life ; and that he will be assisted in his sincere, though imperfect, endeavours after holiness by the influence of God's Holy Spirit.

They assure us, in fine, that the soul does not perish with the body, but shall pass, after death, into another world ; that all mankind shall rise from the grave, and stand before the judgment-seat of Christ, who shall reward the virtuous, and punish the wicked, in a future and eternal state of existence, according to their deserts.

These are great, and interesting, and moment-

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ous truths, either wholly unknown or but very imperfectly known to the world before ; and they render the meanest peasant in this country better acquainted with the nature of the supreme Being, and the relation in which we stand to him, than were any of the greatest sages of ancient times.

Equally excellent, and superior to all other rules of life, are the moral precepts of the Gospel.

Our divine Master, in the first place, laid down two great leading principles for our conduct, love to God, and love to mankind ; and thence deduced (as occasions offered, and incidents occurred, which gave peculiar force and energy to his instructions) all the principal duties towards God, our neighbour, and ourselves.

With respect to God, we are commanded to love, fear, worship, and obey him ; to set him always before us ; to do all things to his glory ; to seek first his kingdom and his righteousness ; to resign ourselves wholly to his pleasure, and submit with patience, cheerfulness, and resignation to every thing he thinks fit to bring upon us.

With regard to our neighbour, we are to exercise towards him the duties of charity, justice, equity, and truth ; we are to love him as *ourselves*, and to do unto all men as we would they

should do unto us : a most admirable rule, which comprehends the sum and substance of all social virtue, and which no man can mistake.

As to those duties which concern ourselves, we are commanded to keep ourselves unspotted from the world, to be temperate in all things, to keep under our body, and bring it into subjection, to preserve an absolute command over all our passions, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.

These are the general directions given for our conduct in the various situations and relations of life. More particular injunctions are given in various parts of Scripture, especially in our Saviour's admirable sermon from the mount; where we find a multitude of most excellent rules of life, short, sententious, solemn, and important; full of wisdom and dignity, yet intelligible and clear. But the principal excellence of the Gospel morality, and that which gives it an infinite superiority over all other moral instructions, is this : that it prefers a meek, yielding, complying, forgiving temper, to that violent, overbearing, inflexible, imperious disposition, which prevails so much in the world; that it regulates not merely our actions, but our affections and our inclinations, and places the check to licentiousness exactly

where it ought to be, that is, on the heart ; that it forbids us to covet the praise of men in our devotions, our alms, and all our other virtues ; that it gives leading rules and principles for all the relative duties of life,—of husbands and wives, of parents and children, of masters and servants, of Christian teachers and their disciples, of governors and subjects ; that it commands us to be, as it were, lights in the world, and examples of good to all ; to injure no man, but to bear injuries patiently ; never to seek revenge, but return good for evil ; to love our very enemies, and to forgive others, as we hope to be forgiven ; to raise our thoughts and views above the present life, and to fix our affections principally on that which is to come.

But besides all this, the manner in which our Lord delivered all his doctrines and all his precepts ; the concise, sententious, solemn, weighty **maxims** into which he generally compressed them ; the easy, familiar, natural, pathetic parables in which he sometimes clothed them ; that divine authority, and those awful sanctions, with which he enforced them : these circumstances give a weight, and dignity, and importance to the precepts of holy writ, which no other moral rules *can boast*.

If now we ask, as it is very natural to ask, who that extraordinary person could be, that was the author of such uncommonly excellent morality as this; the answer is, that he was, to all outward appearance, the reputed son of a carpenter, living with his father and mother in a remote and obscure corner of the world, till the time that he assumed his public character. "Whence then had this man these things, and what wisdom is this that was given unto him?" He had evidently none of the usual means or opportunities of cultivating his understanding or improving his mind. He was born in a low and indigent condition, without education, without learning, without any ancient stores from whence to draw his wisdom and his morality, that were at all likely to fall into his hands. You may, perhaps, in some of the Greek or Roman writers, pick out a few of his precepts, or something like them. But what does this avail? Those writers he had never read. He had never studied at Athens or at Rome; he paid no attention to orators or philosophers. He employed, probably, no language but his own, and had nothing to give him juster notions of virtue and religion, than the rest of his countrymen and persons in his humble rank of life.

usually had. His fellow-labourers in this undertaking, the persons who assisted him during his life, and into whose hands his religion came after his death, were a few fishermen on the Lake of Tiberias, as unlearned and uneducated, and, for the purpose of framing rules of morality, as unpromising, as himself. Is it possible, then, that such men as these could, without any assistance whatever, produce such perfect and incomparable rules of life as those of the Gospel; so greatly superior in purity, solidity, perspicuity, and universal usefulness to all the moral lessons of all the philosophers upon earth put together? Every man of common sense must see that this is absolutely impossible; and that there is no other conceivable way of accounting for this, than by admitting what these persons constantly affirmed, that their doctrines and their precepts came from the Fountain of all perfection; that is, from God himself.

PROPOSITION VII.

THE RAPID AND SUCCESSFUL PROPAGATION OF THE GOSPEL BY THE FIRST TEACHERS OF IT THROUGH A LARGE PART OF THE WORLD, IS A PROOF THAT THEY WERE FAVOURED WITH DIVINE ASSISTANCE AND SUPPORT.

WE find in the Acts of the Apostles, and in their Epistles, that the number of converts to the Christian religion began to increase considerably almost immediately after our Saviour's ascension, and continued increasing to an astonishing degree through every age till the final establishment of Christianity by Constantine. The first assembly which we meet with of Christ's disciples, and that a few days after his removal from the world, consisted of one hundred and twenty. Acts i. 15. About a week after this, three thousand were added in one day, Acts ii. 41 ; and the number of Christians publicly baptized, and publicly associating together, were very soon increased to five thousand. Acts iv. 4. In a few years after this, the converts were described as increasing in great numbers, in great multitudes, and even in myriads, tens of thousands, Acts xxi. 20 ;

and multitudes both of men and women continued to be added daily ; so that within about thirty years after our Lord's death, the Gospel was spread, not only throughout almost all parts of the Roman empire, but even to Parthia and India. It appears from the Epistles written to several churches by the Apostles, that there were large congregations of Christians, both at Rome and in all the principal cities of Greece and Asia. This account is confirmed by contemporary Roman historians ; and Pliny, about eighty years after the ascension, complains that this superstition,* as he calls it, had seized not cities only, but the lesser towns also, and the open country ; that the pagan temples were almost deserted, the sacred solemnities suspended, and scarce any purchasers to be found for the victims. About twenty years after this, Justin Martyr, a Christian writer, declares, that there was no nation of men, whether Greeks or barbarians, not excepting even those savages that wandered in clans from one region to another, and had no fixed habitation, who had not learned to offer prayers and thanksgivings to the Father

* The very name by which modern Pagans, as well as their predecessors, the ancient Heathens, describe the *Christian* religion.

and Maker of all, in the name of Jesus, who was crucified. And thus the church of Christ went on increasing more and more, till, under Constantine, the empire became Christian ; at which time, there is every reason to believe that the Christians were more numerous and more powerful than the Pagans.

In what manner, now, can we account for this wonderful and unexampled progress of the Christian religion ?

If this religion had set out with flattering the corrupt passions of mankind, and held up to them the prospect of power, wealth, rank, or pleasure, as the rewards of their conversion ; if it had soothed their vices, humoured their prejudices, and encouraged their ancient superstitions ; if the persons who taught it had been men of brilliant talents, or commanding eloquence ; if they had first proposed it in times of darkness and ignorance, and among savage and barbarous nations ; if they had been seconded by all the influence and authority of the great potentates of the earth, or propagated their doctrines at the head of a victorious army, one might have seen some reason for their extraordinary success.

But it is well known that the very reverse of

all this was the real truth of the case. It is well known, that the first Preachers of the Gospel declared open war against all the follies, the vices, the interests, the inveterate prejudices, and favourite superstitions of the world; that they were (with few exceptions) men of no abilities, no learning, no artificial rhetoric or powers of persuasion; that their doctrines were promulgated in an enlightened age, and to the most polished nations, and had all the wit and learning and eloquence and philosophy of the world to contend with; and that, instead of being aided by the authority and influence of the civil powers, they were opposed, and harassed, and persecuted by them, even to death, with the most unrelenting cruelty; and all those who embraced their doctrines were exposed to the same hardships and sufferings.

Is it now credible, that, under these circumstances, twelve poor illiterate fishermen of Galilee should be able, merely by their own natural powers, to spread their new religion in so short a space over so large a part of the then known world, without any assistance or co-operation from any quarter whatever? Did anything of the kind ever happen in the world before or *since*? It is plainly unprecedented and im-

possible. As, therefore, all human means of success were against them, what else but supernatural means were left for them? It is clear almost to demonstration, that they must have been endowed with those miraculous powers, and favoured with that divine assistance, to which they pretended, and which of course proved them to be the messengers of Heaven.

PROPOSITION VIII.

A COMPARISON BETWEEN CHRIST AND MAHOMET, AND THEIR RESPECTIVE RELIGIONS, LEAD US TO CONCLUDE THAT AS THE RELIGION OF THE LATTER IS CONFESSEDLY THE INVENTION OF MAN, THAT OF THE FORMER IS DERIVED FROM GOD.

THERE is a religion in the world, called the Mahometan, which is professed in one part of Europe, and most parts of Asia and Africa. The founder of this religion, Mahomet, pretended to be a prophet sent from God; but it is universally allowed by all who are not Mahometans, and who have searched very carefully into the pretensions of this teacher, that he was an enthusiast and an impostor, and that his religion

was a contrivance of his own. Even those persons who reject Christianity do not think Mahometanism to be true ; nor do we ever hear of a Deist embracing it from conviction.

Here, then, we have two religions co-existing together in the world, and both pretending to be revelations from heaven : one of these we know to be a fraud, the other we affirm and believe to be true. If this be so, upon comparing them and their authors together, we may expect to find a most marked and essential difference between them, such a difference as may naturally be supposed to exist between an impostor and a divine teacher, between truth and falsehood. And this, I apprehend, will appear to be actually the case with respect to Christ and Mahomet, and their respective religions.

Mahomet was a man of considerable rank in his own country ; he was the grandson of a man of the most powerful and honourable family in Mecca, and, though not born to a great fortune, he soon acquired one by marriage. These circumstances would of themselves, without any supernatural assistance, greatly contribute to the success of his religion. A person considerable by his wealth, of high descent, and nearly allied to the chiefs of his country, taking upon him-

self the character of a religious teacher in an age of ignorance and barbarism, could not fail of attracting attention and followers.

Christ did not possess these advantages of rank, and wealth, and powerful connexions. He was born of parents in a very mean condition of life. His relations and friends were all in the same humble situation; he was bred up in poverty, and continued in it all his life, having frequently no place where he could lay his head. A man so circumstanced was not likely, by his own personal influence, to force a new religion, much less a false one, upon the world.

Mahomet indulged himself in the grossest pleasures. He perpetually transgressed even those licentious rules which he had prescribed to himself. He made use of the power he had acquired, to gratify his passions without control; and he laid claim to a special permission from heaven to riot in the most unlimited sensuality.

Jesus, on the contrary, preserved throughout life the most unblemished purity and sanctity of manners. He did no sin, but was perfectly holy and undefiled. Not the least stain was ever thrown on his moral character by his bitterest enemies.

Mahomet was violent, impetuous, and sanguinary.

Christ was meek, gentle, benevolent, and merciful.

Mahomet pretended to have secret communications with God, and with the angel Gabriel, which no other person ever saw or heard.

Jesus was repeatedly declared to be the Son of God by voices from heaven, which were plainly and distinctly heard and recorded by others.

The appearance of Mahomet was not foretold by any ancient prophecies; nor was there at the time any expectation of such a person in that part of the world.

The appearance of Christ upon earth was clearly and repeatedly predicted by several ancient prophecies, which most evidently applied to him and to no other, and which were in the keeping of those who were professed enemies to him and his religion. And there was at the time of his birth a general expectation over all the east, that some great and extraordinary personage would then manifest himself to the world.

Mahomet never presumed to foretel any future events, for this plain reason, because he could

not foresee them ; and had he foretold any thing which did not come to pass, it must have entirely ruined his credit with his followers.

Christ foretold many things, which did actually come to pass, particularly his own death and resurrection, and the destruction of Jerusalem.

Mahomet never pretended to work miracles ; on the contrary, he expressly disclaimed any such power, and makes several laboured and awkward apologies for not possessing it.

Jesus, we all know, worked a great number of the most astonishing miracles, in the open face of day, and in the sight of great multitudes of people. He made the deaf to hear, the dumb to speak, the lame to walk, the blind to see, and even the dead to rise from the grave.

Mahomet, during the first twelve years of his mission, made use only of argument and persuasion, and, in consequence of that, gained very few converts. In three years he made only fourteen proselytes, and in seven only eighty-three men and eighteen women.

In the same space of time, our Saviour and his Apostles converted thousands, and tens of thousands, and spread the Christian religion over a great part of Asia.

Mahomet told the Jews, the Christians, and the Arabs, that he taught no other religion than that which was originally taught to their forefathers, by Abraham, Ishmael, Moses, and Jesus. This would naturally prejudice them in favour of his religion.

Christ preached a religion which directly opposed the most favourite opinions and prejudices of the Jews, and subverted, from the very foundation, the whole system of pagan superstition.

Mahomet paid court to the peculiar weaknesses and propensities of his disciples. In that warm climate, where all the passions are ardent and violent, he allowed them a liberal indulgence in sensual gratifications: no less than four wives to each of his followers, with the liberty of divorcing them thrice.*

In the same climate, and among men of the same strong passions, Jesus most peremptorily restrained all his followers from adultery, fornication, and every kind of impurity. He confined them to one wife, and forbade divorce, except for adultery only. But what was still more, he required them to govern their eyes and their thoughts, and to check the very first rising

* *Koran*, chap. iv., page 42. *Ib.*, chap. ii., page 41.

of any criminal desire in the soul. He told them, that whoever looked upon a woman to lust after her had committed adultery with her already in his heart; and he assured them, that none but the pure in heart should see God. He declared open war, in short, against all the criminal passions and evil inclinations of mankind, and expressly required all his followers to renounce those favourite sins that did most easily beset them; nay, even to leave father, mother, brethren, sisters, houses, lands, and every thing that was most dear to them, and take up their cross and follow him.

With the same view above-mentioned, of bribing men to embrace his religion, Mahomet promised to reward his followers with the delights of a most voluptuous paradise, where the objects of their affection were to be almost innumerable, and all of them gifted with transcendent beauty and eternal youth.*

Christ entirely precluded his disciples from all hopes of sensual indulgences hereafter; assuring them that in heaven they should neither marry nor be given in marriage, and promising them nothing but pure, celestial, spiritual joys, such

* *Koran*, chap. lvi., page 413.

as eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived.

Besides the powerful attractions of sensual delights, Mahomet had another still more efficacious mode of producing conviction, and gaining proselytes; and that was force, violence, and arms. He propagated his religion by the sword; and till he made use of that instrument of conversion, the number of his proselytes was a mere nothing. He was at once a prophet, a warrior, a general, and a conqueror. It was at the head of his armies that he preached the Koran. His religion and his conquests went on together; and the former never advanced one step without the latter. He commanded in person in eight general engagements, and undertook, by himself and his lieutenants, fifty military enterprises. Death or conversion was the only choice offered to idolaters, and tribute or conversion to Jews and Christians.

Jesus employed no other means of converting men to his religion, but persuasion, argument, exhortation, miracles, and prophecies. He made use of no other force but the force of truth; no other sword but the sword of the Spirit, that is, the word of God. He had no arms, no legions, to fight his cause. He was the Prince of peace,

and preached peace to all the world. Without power, without support, without any followers but twelve poor humble men, without one circumstance of attraction, influence, or compulsion, he triumphed over the prejudices, the learning, the religion of his country; over the ancient rites, idolatry, and superstition, over the philosophy, wisdom, and authority of the whole Roman empire.

The great object of Mahomet was to make his followers soldiers, and to inspire them with a passion for violence, bloodshed, vengeance, and persecution. He was continually exhorting them to fight for the religion of God; and, to encourage them to do so, he promised them the highest honours, and the richest rewards, in paradise. "They who have suffered for my sake, and have been slain in battle, verily I will expiate their evil deeds from them, and I will surely bring them into a garden watered by rivers, a reward from God, and with God is most excellent reward." * This duty of warring against infidels is frequently inculcated in the Koran, and highly magnified by the Mahomedan divines, who call the sword "the key of heaven and hell," and persuade their people that the least drop of blood spilt in the way

* *Koran*, chap. iii., page 91, and chap. ix., page 242.

of God, as it is called, is most acceptable unto him ; and that the defending the territories of the Moslems for one night, is of more avail than a fast of two months.* It is easy to see to what a degree of fierceness this must raise all the furious vindictive passions of the soul, and what a horde of savages and barbarians it must let loose upon mankind.

The directions of Christ to his disciples were of a different temper. He positively forbade them the use of any violence whatever. The sword that was drawn by one of them in his defence he ordered to be sheathed : " Put up thy sword within the sheath ; they that use the sword shall perish by the sword." Matt. xxvi. 52 ; John xviii. 11. He would not consent to bring down fire from heaven on the Samaritans, who had refused to receive him : " the Son of man," he told them, " came not to destroy men's lives, but to save them. Peace I leave with you ; my peace I give unto you. Do violence to no man ; resist not evil. Be ye merciful, even as your Father in heaven is merciful. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." Luke ix. 56 ; John xiv. 27 ; Luke iii. 14 ; Matt. v. 39 ; Luke vi. 36 ; Matt. v. 7.

* SALE'S *Prelim. Diss.*, sec. xi., page 189.

The consequence was, that the first followers of Mahomet were men of cruelty and violence, living by rapine, murder, and plunder. The first followers of Jesus were men of meek, quiet, inoffensive, peaceable manners, and in their morals irreproachable and exemplary.

If now, after comparing together the authors of the two religions we have been considering, we take a short view of the sacred books of those religions, the Koran and the Gospel, we shall find a difference no less striking between them ; no less strongly marking the truth of the one and the falsehood of the other.

The Koran is highly applauded, both by Mahomet himself and his followers, for the exquisite beauty, purity, and elegance of the language, which they represent as a standing miracle, greater than even that of raising the dead. But admitting its excellence, (which yet has been questioned by several learned men,) if beauty of style and composition is to be considered as a proof of divine inspiration, the writings of Plato and Xenophon, of Cicero and Cæsar, and a multitude of other inimitable writers in various languages, will have as just a claim to a miraculous origin as the Koran. But in truth, these graces of diction, so far from being a circumstance favourable to

the Koran, create a strong suspicion of its being a human fabrication, calculated to charm and captivate men by the arts of rhetoric and the fascination of words, and thus draw off their attention from the futility of its matter, and the weakness of its pretensions. These are the artifices of fraud and falsehood. The Gospel wants them not. It disdains the aid of human eloquence, and depends solely on the force of truth and the power of God for its success. "I came not," as St. Paul sublimely expresses himself, "with excellency of speech ; nor with the enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the spirit and of power, that your faith might not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God." 1 Cor. ii. 1, 4, 5.

But, whatever may be the purity of the language, the matter and substance of the Koran cannot bear a moment's comparison with that of the Gospel. The narrative is dull, heavy, monotonous, uninteresting ; loaded with endless repetitions, with senseless and preposterous fables, with trivial, disgusting, and even immoral precepts. Add to this, that it has very little novelty or originality to recommend it, the most material parts of it being borrowed from the Scriptures of the Old Testament or the New ; and even these

are so disguised and deformed by passing through the hands of the impostor, (who vitiates and debases every thing he touches,) that you can hardly know them to be the same incidents or transactions that you read with so much delight in the Bible.

The Gospel, on the contrary, is every where concise, simple, original, animated, interesting, dignified; its precepts important, its morality perfect, its sentiments sublime, its views noble and comprehensive, its sanctions awful!

In the Koran, Mahomet is perpetually boasting of his own merits and achievements, and the supreme excellence of his book. In the Gospel no encomiums are bestowed by the Evangelists, either on themselves or their writings. Even the virtues of their divine Master are not distinctly specified, or brought forward into a conspicuous point of view. It is from his actions only and discourses, not from the observations of his historians, that we can collect the various transcendent excellencies of his character. Here we plainly see the sober modesty of truth opposed to the ostentatious vanity of imposture.

In the description of future rewards and punishments, the Koran is minute, circumstantial, and extravagant, both in painting the horrors of the one and the delights of the other. It de-

scribes things which cannot and ought not to be described ; and enters into details too horrible, too licentious, to be presented to the human mind.

In the Gospel the pains and the pleasures of future life are represented concisely, in strong but general and indefinite terms, sufficient to give them a powerful, but not an overwhelming influence over the mind.

There is still another and a very material mark of discrimination between the Koran and the Gospel. Mahomet shows throughout the utmost anxiety to guard against objections, to account for his working no miracles, and to defend his conduct, in several instances, against the charges which he suspects may be brought against him. This is always the case with imposture. It is always suspicious, afraid of being detected, and to every appearance of hostility, solicitous to anticipate, and eager to repel, the accusations of its enemies.

Truth has no occasion for such precautions, and therefore never uses them. We see nothing of this sort in the Gospel. The sacred historians show not the smallest solicitude, nor take the least pains, to obviate cavils or remove difficulties. *They relate plainly and simply what they know*

to be true. They entertain no doubt of it themselves, and seem to have no suspicion that any one else can doubt it ; they therefore leave the facts to speak for themselves, and send them unprotected into the world, to make their way (as they have done) by their own native force and incontrovertible truth.

Such are the leading features of Mahomet and his religion on the one hand, and of Christ and his religion on the other ; and never was there a stronger or more striking contrast seen than in this instance. They are, in short, in every essential article, the direct opposites of each other. And as it is on all hands acknowledged that Mahomet was an impostor, it is fair to conclude that Christ, who was the very reverse of Mahomet, was the reverse of an impostor, that is, a real messenger from heaven. In Mahomet we see every distinctive mark of fraud : in Jesus, not one of these is to be found ; but, on the contrary, every possible indication and character of truth.

PROPOSITION IX.

THE PREDICTIONS DELIVERED BY THE ANCIENT PROPHETS, AND FULFILLED IN OUR SAVIOUR, SHOW THAT HE WAS THE MESSIAH EXPECTED BY THE JEWS, AND THAT HE CAME INTO THE WORLD BY DIVINE APPOINTMENT, TO BE THE GREAT DELIVERER AND REDEEMER OF MANKIND.

THE word Messiah signifies "anointed;" that is, a person appointed to some high station, dignity, or office; because originally among the eastern nations men so appointed (particularly Kings, Priests, and Prophets) were anointed with oil. Hence the word Messiah means the person pre-ordained and appointed by God to be the great Deliverer of the Jewish nation, and the Redeemer of all mankind. The word Christ means the same thing.

Now it was foretold concerning the Messiah, that he should come before the sceptre departed from Judah, that is, before the Jewish government was destroyed, Genesis xlix. 10; and accordingly Christ appeared a short time before the period when the Jewish government was totally overthrown by the Romans.

It was foretold, that he should come before

the destruction of the second temple : “The desire of all nations shall come, and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts : the glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former.” Haggai ii. 7, 9. Accordingly Christ appeared some time before the destruction of the city and the temple of Jerusalem by the Romans.

It was foretold by the Prophet Daniel, that he should come at the end of four hundred and ninety years after the rebuilding of Jerusalem, which had been laid waste during the captivity of the Jews in Babylon, and that he should be cut off; and that afterwards the city and sanctuary of Jerusalem should be destroyed and made desolate. Dan. ix. 26. And accordingly, at what time soever the beginning of the four hundred and ninety years can, according to any fair interpretation of the words, be fixed, the end of them will fall about the time of Christ’s appearing : and it is well known how entirely the city and sanctuary were destroyed by the Romans some years after he was cut off and crucified.

It was foretold, that he should perform many great and beneficial miracles ; that the eyes of the blind should be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped ; that the lame man

should leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing, Isaiah xxxv. 5, 6 : and this we know was literally fulfilled in the miracles of Christ ; the blind received their sight, the lame walked, the deaf heard.

It was foretold, that he should die a violent death ; that he should be wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities ; that the chastisement of our peace should be upon him ; and that with his stripes we should be healed ; that God would lay on him the iniquity of us all. Isaiah liii. throughout ; and Daniel ix. 26. All which was exactly accomplished in the sufferings of Christ, “ who died for our sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.” 1 Peter iii. 18.

It was foretold, that to him should the gathering of the people be ; and that God would give him the Heathen for his inheritance, and the utmost parts of the earth for his possession, Psalm ii. 8 ; which was punctually fulfilled by the wonderful success of the Gospel, and its universal propagation throughout the world.

Lastly, many minuter circumstances were foretold of the great Deliverer or Redeemer that was to come.

That he should be born of a virgin ; that he

should be of the tribe of Judah, and the seed of David ; that he should be born in the town of Bethlehem ; that he should ride upon an ass in humble triumph into the city of Jerusalem ; that he should be a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief ; that he should be sold for thirty pieces of silver ; that he should be scourged, buffeted, and spit upon ; that he should be numbered with the transgressors ; (that is, should be crucified, as he was between two thieves ;) that he should have gall and vinegar given him to drink ; that they who saw him crucified should mock at him, and at his trusting in God to deliver him ; that the soldiers should cast lots for his garments ; that he should make his grave with the rich ; and that he should rise again without seeing corruption. Isaiah vii. 14 ; Micah v. ; Zechariah ix. 9 ; Isaiah liii. 3 ; Zechariah xi. 12 ; Isaiah l. 6 ; liii. 12 ; Psalm lxix. 21 ; xxii. 7, 18 ; Isaiah liii. 9 ; Psalm xvi. 10. All these circumstances, it is well known, were foretold, and, to the greatest possible exactness, fulfilled in the person of Christ.

What now shall we say to these things ? Here are upwards of twenty different particulars, many of them of a very extraordinary nature,

which it was foretold, seven hundred years before our Saviour was born, would all meet in him, and which did all actually meet in his person. Is not this a most extraordinary consideration ? There are but three possible suppositions that can be made concerning it : either that this was a mere fortuitous coincidence, arising entirely from chance and accident ; or that these prophecies were written after the events had taken place ; or, lastly, that they were real predictions, delivered many years before these events came to pass, and all fulfilled in Christ. That any one should by chance hit upon so many things, which should all prove true, and prove true concerning one and the same person, though several of them were of such a nature as were unlikely to happen singly, and by far the greatest part of which had never before happened singly to any person whatever : this, I say, exceeds all bounds of credibility, and all power of conjecture or calculation.

That these prophecies were not written or delivered after the things predicted had happened is most certain ; because they are found in books which existed long before those events came to pass ; that is, in the books of the *Old Testament* ; and the Jews themselves, the mor-

tal enemies of Christ and his religion, acknowledge that these prophecies were in those books, exactly as we now see them, many hundred years before Christ came into the world.

The books themselves were in their own keeping, in the keeping of our adversaries, who would undoubtedly take effectual care that nothing favourable to Christ should be fraudulently inserted into them. The Jews were our librarians. The prophecies were in their custody, and are read in all their copies of the Old Testament as well as in ours. They have made many attempts to explain them away, but none to question their authenticity.

It remains then that these are all real predictions, all centring in our Saviour, and in him only, and delivered many centuries before he was born. As no one but God has the foreknowledge of events, it is from him these prophecies must have proceeded; and they show, of course, that Christ was the person whom he had for a great length of time predetermined to send into the world to be the great Deliverer, Redeemer, and Saviour of mankind.

PROPOSITION X.

THE PROPHECIES DELIVERED BY OUR SAVIOUR HIMSELF PROVE THAT HE WAS ENDUED WITH THE FOREKNOWLEDGE OF FUTURE EVENTS; WHICH BELONGS ONLY TO GOD, AND TO THOSE INSPIRED BY HIM.

HE did very particularly, and at several different times, foretel his own death, and the circumstances of it; that the Chief Priests and Scribes should condemn him to death, and deliver him to the Gentiles, that is, to Pilate and the Roman soldiers, to mock, and scourge, and crucify him; that he should be betrayed into their hands; that Judas Iscariot was the person who would betray him; that all his disciples would forsake him, and flee; and that Peter would particularly thrice deny him in one night. He foretold further, that he would rise again the third day; that, after his ascension, he would send down the Holy Ghost on his Apostles, which would enable them to work many miracles. He foretold, likewise, many particulars concerning the future success of the Gospel, and what should happen to several of his disciples; he foretold what opposition and persecution they should meet with in their preach-

ing ; he foretold what particular kind of death Peter should die, and intimated that St. John should live (as he did) till after the destruction of Jerusalem ; he foretold, that, notwithstanding all opposition and persecution, the Gospel should yet have such success, as to spread itself over the world ; and, lastly, he foretold the destruction of Jerusalem, with such very particular and minute circumstances, in the twenty-fourth chapter of St. Matthew, the thirteenth of St. Mark, and the twenty-first of St. Luke, that no one who reads the description of that event, in the historians of those times, can have the smallest doubt of our Saviour's divine foreknowledge. We have a most authentic, exact, and circumstantial account of the siege and destruction of that city by the Romans, written by Josephus, a Jewish and contemporary historian ; and the description he has given of this terrible calamity so perfectly corresponds with our Saviour's prophecy, that one would have thought, had we not known the contrary, that it had been written by a Christian, on purpose to illustrate that prediction.

This power of foretelling future events is a plain proof that Christ came from God, and was endued with this power from above.

PROPOSITION XI.

THE MIRACLES PERFORMED BY OUR LORD DEMONSTRATE
HIM TO HAVE POSSESSED DIVINE POWER.

ALTHOUGH the preceding propositions contain very convincing proofs of the divine mission of Christ, and the divine authority of his religion, yet, undoubtedly, the strongest evidence of this arises from the wonderful and well-attested miracles which he wrought from the beginning to the end of his ministry. He cured the most inveterate diseases; he made the lame to walk; he opened the eyes of the blind and the ears of the deaf; he cast out devils; he walked upon the sea; he fed five thousand persons with a few small loaves and fishes, and even raised the dead to life again. These miracles were all wrought in open day, in the sight of multitudes of witnesses, who could not be imposed upon in things which they saw plainly with their own eyes, who had an opportunity of scrutinizing them as much as they pleased, and who did actually scrutinize them with a most critical exactness, as appears from the very remarkable instance of the blind man restored to sight by *our Lord*, in the ninth chapter of St. John, a

transaction which I recommend very earnestly to the attention of my readers.

It is true, that miracles being very unusual and extraordinary facts, they require very strong evidence to support them ; much stronger, it must be owned, than common events that are recorded in history : and accordingly the miracles of Christ have this very strong and extraordinary evidence to support them ; evidence such as is not to be equalled in any other instance, and such as is fully competent to prove the reality of the greatest miracle that ever was performed.

Besides a multitude of other persons, who were eye-witnesses to these miracles, and who were actually convinced and converted by them, there were twelve persons, called Apostles ; plain, honest, unprejudiced men ; whom our Saviour chose to be his constant companions and friends, who were almost always about his person, accompanied him in his travels, heard all his discourses, saw all his miracles, and attended him through all the different scenes of his life, death, and resurrection, till the time of his ascension into heaven. These persons were perfectly capable of judging whether the works which they saw Jesus perform were real miracles or not ;

they could tell whether a person whom they had known to be blind all his life was suddenly restored to sight by our Saviour's only speaking a word or touching his eyes ; they could tell whether he did actually, in open day-light, walk upon the sea without sinking, and without any visible support ; whether a person called Lazarus, whom they were well acquainted with, and whom they knew to have been four days dead and buried, was raised to life again merely by Christ saying, "Lazarus, arise."

In these, and other facts of this sort, they could not possibly be deceived. Now these, and many other miracles, equally astonishing, they affirm that they themselves actually saw performed by our Saviour. In consequence of this, from being Jews, and of course strongly prejudiced against Christ and his outward appearance, which was the very reverse of every thing they expected in their Messiah, they became his disciples ; and on account of their conversion, and more particularly on account of their asserting the truth of his miracles and his resurrection, they endured for a long course of years the severest labours, hardships, sufferings, and persecution, that human nature could be *exposed* to, and at last submitted to the most

cruel and excruciating deaths ; all which they might easily have avoided, if they would only have said that Christ was not the Son of God, that he never worked any miracles, and never rose from the dead. Yet this they refused to say, and were content to die rather than say it.*

Is not this giving the strongest proof of their sincerity, and of the reality of Christ's miracles, that human nature and human testimony are capable of giving? The concurrent and uncontradicted testimony of twelve such witnesses is, according to all the rules of evidence, sufficient to establish the truth of any one fact in the world, however extraordinary, however miraculous.

If there had been any powerful temptation thrown in the way of these men ; if they had been bribed, like the followers of Mahomet, with sensual indulgences ; or, like Judas Iscariot, with a sum of money ; one should not have been much surprised at their persisting, for a time at least, in a premeditated falsehood. But when we know that, instead of any of these

* No man ever laid down his life for the honour of Jupiter, Neptune, or Apollo ; but how many thousands have sealed their Christian testimony with their blood !

allurements being held out to them, their Master always foretold to them, and they themselves soon found by experience, that they could gain nothing, and must lose every thing, in this world by embracing Christianity; it is utterly impossible to account for their embracing it on any other ground than their conviction of its truth from the miracles which they saw. In fact, must they not have been absolutely mad to have incurred voluntarily so much misery, and such certain destruction, for affirming things to be true which they knew to be false; more especially as their own religion taught them, that they would be punished most severely in another world, as well as in this, for so wicked a fraud? Is it usual for men thus to sport with their own happiness, and their very lives, and to bring upon themselves, with their eyes open, such dreadful evils, without any reason in the world, and without the least possible benefit, advantage, credit, or pleasure resulting from it? Where have you ever heard of any instance of this sort? Would any twelve men you ever knew, especially men of credit and character, take it into their heads to assert that a certain person in the neighbourhood raised a dead man to life, *when they knew that no such thing had ever*

happened : and that they would all, with one consent, suffer themselves to be put to death rather than confess that they had told a lie? Such a thing never happened since the world began. It is contrary to all experience and all credibility, and would be, in itself, a greater miracle than any of those that are recorded in the Gospel.

It is certain then (as certain as any thing can be that depends on human testimony) that real miracles were wrought by Christ; and as no miracles can be wrought but by the power of God, it is equally certain that Christ and his religion drew their origin from God.*

* On the clear and evident marks of discrimination between the real miracles of the Gospel, and the pretended miracles of Paganism and of Popery, see Bishop Douglas's Criterion, and Dr. Paley's most masterly observations, in his View of the Evidences of Christianity, Prop. i., ch. ii., b. i., p. 329.

PROPOSITION XII.

THE RESURRECTION OF OUR LORD FROM THE DEAD IS A
FACT FULLY PROVED BY THE CLEAREST EVIDENCE,
AND IS THE SEAL AND CONFIRMATION OF HIS DIVINITY,
AND OF THE TRUTH OF HIS RELIGION.

THE resurrection of Christ being one of those miracles which are recorded in the Gospel, the truth of it is, in fact, already proved by what has been advanced respecting those miracles in the preceding article. But it is an event so singular in its nature, and so infinitely important in its consequences, that it well deserves to be made the subject of a distinct proposition.

After our Saviour's crucifixion, Joseph of Arimathea, we are told, laid the body in his own new tomb, hewn out of a rock, and rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre. In order to secure themselves against any fraud, the Jews desired the Roman Governor, Pilate, to grant them a band of soldiers to guard the sepulchre, lest, as they said, the disciples should come by night and steal the corpse away. Pilate's answer was in these words: "Ye have a watch; go your way, *make it as sure as you can.*" "So they went, and

made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch." Matt. xxvii. 65, 66. The Evangelist then proceeds to relate the great event of the resurrection with that ingenuous and natural simplicity which characterizes the sacred historians, and which carries upon the face of it every mark of sincerity and truth :—

"In the end of the Sabbath, as it began to dawn towards the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre. And, behold, there was a great earthquake : for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it. His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow : and for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men. And the angel of the Lord answered, and said unto the women, Fear not ye ; for I know that ye seek Jesus that was crucified. He is not here ; for he is risen from the dead ; and, behold, he goeth before you into Galilee : there ye shall see him. Lo, I have told you. And as they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail. And they came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him. Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid : go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there

they shall see me. Now when they were going, behold, some of the watch came into the city, and showed unto the Chief Priests all that was done. And when they were assembled with the elders, and had taken counsel, they gave large money unto the soldiers, saying, Say ye, His disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept. And if this come to the Governor's ears, we will persuade him, and secure you. So they took the money, and did as they were taught : and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews unto this day." Matthew xxviii. 1—15.

Such is the relation of this wonderful fact given by St. Matthew, which comprehends not only his own account of it, but that also which was circulated in opposition to it by the Chief Priests and rulers of the Jews. Here then we have fairly before us the two different representations of this event by the friends and by the enemies of Christ ; of which the former asserts that it was a real resurrection, the other that it was a fraud ; and between these two we must form our opinions ; for no third story has been set up, that we know of, by any one.

One thing is agreed on by both sides ; namely, that the body was not to be found in the sepulchre. *It was gone* ; and the question is, By what means ?

The soldiers gave out, that the disciples “came by night, while they slept, and stole it away.” But it is not very easy to understand how the soldiers could depose to any thing that passed while they were fast asleep ; they could not possibly tell in what manner the body was stolen away, or by whom. Nor, considering the extreme severity of the Roman military discipline, is it credible, that if they had been asleep they would have confessed it ? For it was certain death to a Roman soldier to be found sleeping upon guard. Nothing could have prevailed upon them to make such a declaration as that, but a previous promise of impunity and reward from the Jewish rulers ; a plain proof that they had been tampered with, and that it was a concerted story.

In the next place, supposing the story true, of what use could the dead body be to the disciples ? It could not prove to them, or to others, that their Master was risen from the dead : on the contrary, it must have been a standing and a visible proof of the contrary. It must convince them that he, instead of being the deliverer they expected, was an impostor, and they most cruelly deceived. And why they should choose to keep in their possession, and to have continually before their eyes, a lifeless corpse, which completely blasted all

their hopes, and continually reminded them of their bitter disappointment, is somewhat difficult to be imagined.

The tale, then, told by the soldiers, is, upon the very face of it, a gross and clumsy forgery. The consequence is, that the account given by St. Matthew is the true one. For, if the body was actually gone, (an acknowledged point on all sides,) and if it was not, as we have proved, stolen away by the disciples, there are but two possible suppositions remaining; either that it was taken away by the Jews and Romans, or that it was raised to life again by the power of God. If the former had been the case, it could only have been for the purpose of confronting and convicting the disciples of falsehood and fraud by the production of the dead body. But the dead body was not produced. It was therefore, as the Gospel affirms, raised from the grave, and restored to life. There is no other conceivable alternative left.

And that this was actually the case is proved by our Lord's appearing, after his resurrection, not only to the two women, who came first to the sepulchre, but to the two disciples going to Emmaus, and to the disciples assembled together at two different times, and to all the Apostles, and to above five hundred brethren at once. And he not

only appeared to them silently, but he talked and ate with them ; he showed them his hands and his feet ; he made them handle him ; he held several long conversations with them ; and at last ascended up into heaven in their sight.

These were things of which the plainest and most ignorant men could judge. It was impossible for them to be deceived in an object with which they were well acquainted, and which presented itself to all their senses.

But there is another most decisive proof, arising from their own conduct, that they were perfectly convinced of the reality of our Lord's resurrection.

It appears that the Apostles were far from being men of natural courage and firmness of mind. When our Lord was apprehended, all his disciples, we are told, forsook him, and fled. Peter followed him afar off, and went into a hall in the palace of the High Priest, where the servants warmed themselves ; and being there charged with being a disciple of Jesus, he peremptorily denied it three times with vehemence and with oaths. It does not appear that any of his disciples attended in the judgment-hall to assist or to support him ; and when he was crucified, the only persons that ventured to stand near his cross were his mother, and two or three other women, and

St. John. They all, in short, appeared dismayed and terrified with the fate of their Master, afraid to acknowledge the slightest connexion with him, and utterly unable to face the dangers that seemed to menace them. But immediately after the resurrection of their Lord, a most astonishing change took place in their conduct. From being the most timid of men, they suddenly became courageous, undaunted, and intrepid ; they boldly preached that very Jesus whom but a short time before they had deserted in his greatest distress ; and although his crucifixion was fresh before their eyes, and they had reason to expect the same or a similar fate, yet they persisted in avowing themselves his disciples, and told the Jews publicly, “ that God had made that same Jesus whom they had crucified both Lord and Christ,” Acts ii. 36 ; and when they were brought before the rulers and elders to be examined respecting the lame man whom they had cured at the gate of the temple, “ Be it known unto you all,” said they, “ and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, and whom God raised from the dead, even by him does this man stand here before you all. This is the stone that was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head-stone of the

corner, Neither is there salvation in any other ; for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." Acts iv. 10—12.

And when a second time they were brought before the council, and forbidden to teach in the name of Jesus, their answer was, "We ought to obey God rather than men." And when they were again reprimanded, and threatened, and beaten, yet "they ceased not in the temple, and in every house, to teach and to preach Jesus Christ; and with great power gave the Apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus." Acts v. 29, 42 ; iv. 33.

In what manner now shall we account for this sudden and most singular change in the disposition and, as it were, in the very constitution of the Apostles? If Christ had not risen from the grave, and his dead body was in the possession of his disciples, was this calculated to inspire them with affection for their leader, and with courage to preach a doctrine which they knew to be false? Would it not, on the contrary, have increased their natural timidity, depressed their spirits, extinguished all their zeal, and filled them with indignation and horror against a man who had so grossly deceived them, and robbed

them, under false pretences, of every thing that was dear and valuable to them in the world? Most unquestionably it would. Nor is it possible to account, in any rational way, for the strange revolution which took place in their minds, so soon after their Master's death, but by admitting that they were fully persuaded and satisfied that he rose alive from the grave.

It may be said, perhaps, that this persuasion was the effect, not of irresistible evidence, but of enthusiasm, which made them fancy that some visionary phantom, created solely by their own heated imagination, was the real body of their Lord restored to life. But nothing could be more distant from enthusiasm than the character and conduct of these men, and the courage they manifested, which was perfectly calm, sober, collected, and cool. But what completely repels this suspicion is, that their bitterest adversaries never once accused them of enthusiasm, but charged them with a crime which was utterly inconsistent with it,—fraud and theft; with stealing away the body from the grave. And if they did this, if that dead body was actually before their eyes, how was it possible for any degree of enthusiasm short of madness (which was never *alleged* against them) to mistake a dead body

for a living man, whom they saw, and touched, and conversed with? No such instance of enthusiasm ever occurred in the world.

The resurrection of our Lord being thus established on the firmest grounds, it affords an unanswerable proof of the truth of our Saviour's pretensions, and, consequently, of the truth of his religion: for had he not been what he assumed to be,—the Son of God, it is impossible that God should have raised him from the dead, and thereby given his sanction to an imposture. But as he did actually restore him to life, he thereby set his seal to the divinity which he claimed, and acknowledged him, in the most public and authoritative manner, to be “his beloved Son, in whom he was well pleased.” Matt. iii. 17.

And this evidence of our Lord's divine mission is of the more importance, because our Saviour himself appealed to it as the grand proof of his being sent from heaven to instruct and to redeem mankind. For when he cast the buyers and sellers out of the temple, and the Jews required of him a sign, that is, a miraculous proof that he had the authority of God for doing those things, his answer was, “Destroy this temple,” (meaning his body,) “and in three days I will

raise it up. When, therefore, he was risen from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this unto them: and they believed the Scriptures, and the word which Jesus had said," John ii. 19, 22; and they themselves constantly referred to the resurrection more than to any other evidence, as the great foundation on which their faith was built.

The reason for this, perhaps, was, that this great event contained in itself, at once, the evidence both of miracle and of prophecy. It was certainly one of the most stupendous manifestations of divine power that could be presented to the observation of mankind; and it was, at the same time, the completion of two most remarkable prophecies,—that of our Saviour's above-mentioned, and that well-known one of King David's, which St. Peter expressly applies to the resurrection of Christ: "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thy Holy One to see corruption." Psalm xvi. 10; Acts ii. 27.*

* On this subject of Christ's resurrection I must again refer my readers to Dr. Paley, vol. ii., ch. ix., p. 209; and also to the conclusion of his work; the force of which it seems to me scarce possible for an unprejudiced reader to withstand.

CONCLUSION.

THESE are the principal proofs of the truth of the Christian religion. Many others of a very satisfactory nature might be added ; but the question may be safely rested on those that have here been stated.

And when we collect them all together into one point of view ; when we consider the deplorable ignorance and inconceivable depravity of the heathen world before the birth of Christ, which rendered a divine interposition essentially necessary, and therefore highly probable ; the appearance of Christ upon earth, at the very time when his presence was most wanted, and when there was a general expectation throughout the east, that some great and extraordinary personage was soon to come into the world ; the transcendent excellence of our Lord's character, so infinitely beyond that of every other moral teacher ; the calmness, the composure, the dignity, the integrity, the spotless sanctity of his manners, so utterly inconsistent with every idea of enthusiasm or imposture ; the sublimity and importance of his doctrines ; the consummate wisdom and perfect purity of his moral precepts, far exceeding

the natural powers of a man born in the humblest situation, and in a remote and obscure corner of the world, without learning, education, languages, or books; the rapid and astonishing propagation of his religion, in a very short space of time, through almost every region of the east, by the sole efforts of himself and a few illiterate fishermen, in direct opposition to all the power, the authority, the learning, the philosophy, the reigning vices, prejudices, and superstitions of the world; the complete and marked opposition, in every essential point, between the character and religion of Christ, and the character and religion of Mahomet, exactly such as might be expected between truth and falsehood; the minute description of all the most material circumstances of his birth, life, sufferings, death, and resurrection, given by the ancient Prophets many hundred years before he was born, and exactly fulfilled in him, and him only, pointing him out as the Messiah of the Jews and the Redeemer of mankind; the various prophecies delivered by Christ himself, which were all punctually accomplished, more especially the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans; the many astonishing miracles wrought by Jesus, in *the open face of day*, before thousands of specta-

tors, the reality of which is proved by multitudes of the most unexceptionable witnesses, who sealed their testimony with their blood, and was even acknowledged by the earliest and most inveterate enemies of the Gospel; and, lastly, that most astonishing and well-authenticated miracle of our Lord's resurrection, which was the seal and confirmation of his own divine origin, and that of his religion;—when all these various evidences are brought together, and impartially weighed, it seems hardly within the power of a fair and ingenuous mind to resist the impression of their united force. If such a combination of evidence as this is not sufficient to satisfy an honest inquirer into truth, it is utterly impossible that any event, which passed in former times, and which we did not see with our own eyes, can ever be proved to have happened, by any degree of testimony whatever. It may safely be affirmed, that no instance can be produced of any one fact or event, said to have taken place in past ages, and established by such evidence as that on which the Christian revelation rests, that afterwards turned out to be false. We challenge the enemies of our faith to bring forward, if they can, any such instance. If they cannot, (and we know it to be impossible,) we have a right

to say, that a religion, supported by such an extraordinary accumulation of evidence, must be true ; and that all men who pretend to be guided by argument and by proof are bound, by the most sacred obligations, to receive the religion of Christ as a real revelation from God.

A
MORAL DEMONSTRATION
OF THE
TRUTH OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

WITH
AN INTRODUCTION
ON
THE NATURE AND FORCE OF PROBABLE
ARGUMENTS.

FIRST PRINTED IN THE YEAR 1660.

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INTRODUCTION.

ON

THE NATURE AND FORCE OF PROBABLE ARGUMENTS.

EVERY probable argument hath in it something of persuasion and proof; and although it cannot produce evidence and entire conviction to a wise and a discerning spirit, yet it can effect all that it ought: and although, if the will list, or if passions rule, the understanding shall be made stubborn against it, and reject it easily; yet, if nothing be put in bar against it, it may bring a man to adhere to it beyond the evidence.

But in some cases there are a whole army of little people, heaps of probable inducements, which the understanding amasses together, and from every side gathers all that can give light and motion to the article in question; it draws auxiliaries from every thing, fights with every

weapon, and by all means pursues the victory ; it joins line to line, and precept to precept, reason to reason, and reason to authority ; the sayings of wise men with the proverbs of the people ; consent of talkers, and the arguings of disputers ; the nature of the thing, and the reasonableness of its expectations ; the capacities and possibilities of men, and of accidents ; the purposes and designs, the usefulness and rewards, and by what all agents are and ought to be moved ; customs are mingled with laws ; and decencies, with consideration of profit ; the understanding considers the present state and heap of circumstances, and by prudence weighs every thing in its own balance ; it considers the consequent of the opinion it intends to establish, and well weighs the inconvenience of the contrary. But, from the obscurity and insufficiency of these particulars, there cannot come a perfect light ; if a little black be mingled with white, the product must have something of every influence that can be communicated from its principle, or material constitution ; and ten thousand millions of uncertainties cannot make one certain.

In this case the understanding comes not to any certainty by the energy of the motives and *direct arguments* of probability, or by the first

effort and impresses of their strength, but by a particular reflexion which it makes upon the heap, and by a secondary discoursing extracted from the whole; as being therefore convinced, because it believes it to be impossible that so many considerations, that no way conspire either in matter or design, should agree in the production of a lie. It is not likely that so many beams of light should issue from the chambers of heaven for no other reason but to lead us into a precipice. Probable arguments and prudential motives are the great hinges of human actions; for as a Pope once said, "it is but a little wit that governs the world;" and the uncertainty of arguments is the great cause of contingency in events. But, as uncertain as most counsels are, yet all the great transactions of the affairs of the world are resolved on and acted by them; by suspicions, and fears, and probable apprehensions, infinite evils are prevented; and it is not, therefore, likely to be an error, by which so perpetually so many good things are procured and effected. For it were a disparagement to the wise providence of God, and a lessening the rare economy of the divine government, that he should permit almost all the world, and all reiglements, the varieties of event, and all the changes of

kingdoms, and all counsels and deliberations, to be conducted by moral demonstrations, and to be under the power of probabilities ; and yet that these should be deceitful and false. Neither is it to be imagined, that God should permit wise men and good men, that on purpose place their reason in indifference, that abate of their heats and quench their own extravagant fires ; men, that wipe away all clouds and mists from their eyes, that they may see clearly ; men that search as they ought to do, for things that they are bound to find, things that they are commanded to search, and upon which even all their interests depend, and yet, inquiring after the end whither they are directed, and by what means it is to be acquired ; that these men should be inevitably abused by their own reason, by the best reason they have ; and that, when concerning the thing which cannot be demonstrated by proper and physical arguments, yet we are to enter into a persuasion so great, that for the verification of it men must venture their lives and their souls ; I say, if this kind of proof be not sufficient to effect all this, and sufficiently to assure such men, and competently to affirm and strengthen such resolutions, salvation and damnation must be by chance ; or, which is worse, it

must be impossible to be well, but when it cannot choose to be otherwise; and this, I say, is not to be imagined that God will or does permit, since all these intercourses so much concern God's glory, and our eternal interest.

The main events of heaven and hell do in some regards depend, as to us, upon our faith, whose objects are represented with such lights from God and right reason as are sufficient to persuade, not to demonstrate; they are such, which leave something to us of choice and love; and every proposition of Scripture, though it be as sure, yet it is not so evident, as the principles of geometry; and the Spirit of God effects his purposes with an influence as soft and placid as the warmth of the sun, while a physical demonstration blows hard and high as the north wind; indeed a man must use rudeness, if he does not quit his garment at so loud a call, but we are more willing to part with it, when the sun gently requires us: so is a moral demonstration, it is so humane, so persuasive, so complying with the nature and infirmities of man, with the actions of his life and his manner of operation, that it seems to have been created on purpose for the needs and uses of man in this life, for virtue and for hopes, for faith and for charity, to make us

to believe by love, and to love by believing ; for in heaven they that see and love cannot choose but love, and see, and comprehend ; for it is a reward, and fills all their faculties, and is not possessed by us, but itself possesses us. In this world, where we are to do something ourselves, though all by the grace of God, that which we do of ourselves is nothing else but to work as we ourselves can ; which indeed happens to be, in propositions, as it is in the love of God ; this cannot fail us, but we may fail of it ; and so are the sentences of religion, infallible in themselves, but we may be deceived, while by a fallible way we proceed to infallible notices, for nothing else could endear our labour and our love, our search and our obedience : and therefore this must be sufficient and acceptable, if we do what we can : but then this also will secure our confidence ; and in the noises of Christendom, when disputing fellows say, “their brother is damned for not believing them,” we need not to regard any such noises, if we proceed prudently as we can, and honestly as we ought ; probable motives of our understanding are our sufficient conduct, and then we have this warrant, “Brethren, if our hearts condemn us not, then have we peace *towards God.*” 1 John iii. 21. And God would

never have inspired his church with prudence, or made any such virtue, if the things which were put under the conduct of it, that is, probabilities, were not instrumental to the service of God, and to the verification of all its just and proper productions.

Probable arguments are like little stars, every one of which will be useless, as to our conduct and enlightening ; but, when they are tied together by order and vicinity, by the finger of God, and the hand of an angel, they make a constellation, and are not only powerful in their influence, but, like a bright angel, to guide and to enlighten our way. And, although the light is not great as the light of the sun or moon, yet mariners sail by their conduct ; and, though with trepidation and some danger, yet very regularly they enter into the haven. This heap of probable inducements is not of power as a mathematical and physical demonstration, which is in discourse as the sun is in heaven ; but it makes a milky and a white path, visible enough to walk in securely.

And, next to these tapers of effective reason, drawn from the nature and from the events, and the accidents, and the expectations, and experiences of things, stands the grandeur of a long

and united authority: the understanding thus reasoning, "That it is not credible, that this thing should have escaped the wiser heads of all the great personages in the world, who stood at the chairs of Princes, or sat in the ruler's chair; and should only appear to two or three bold, illiterate, or vicious persons, ruled by lusts, and over-ruled by evil habits." But in this we have the same security and the same confidence that timorous persons have in the dark; they are pleased and can see what is and what is not, if there be a candle; but in the dark, they are less fearful if they be in company.

This way of arguing some are pleased to call a "moral demonstration;" not that it can make a proposition clear and bright, and quit from clouds and obscurity, as a natural demonstration can; for I may in this case use Aristotle's saying, *Tōto μὲν ἀληθές, ἀλλ' ὁ σαφές*, "Things of this nature may be very true, but are not very evident;" but it can produce the same effect, that is, it can lead into truth, not with as much brightness, but with as much certainty and infallibility in the event of things. For a man may as prosperously and certainly arrive at his *journey's end*, though but conducted by him that

went the way but once before him, as if he had a straight path walled in on both sides ; so may we find truth as certainly by probabilities, as by demonstrations : we are not so sure that we find it, but it is oftentimes as surely found. And if the heap arrive at that which we call a moral demonstration, it is as certain that no moral demonstration can be opposed against it, as that no natural demonstration can be brought in contradiction to a natural. For the understanding cannot call any thing a moral demonstration, till, by considering the particulars on both sides, the reasonableness of one, and the unreasonableness of the other, with a cold scent, and liberty of spirit, and an unbiassed will, it hath passed the sentence for the truth ; and since in this case all the opposition is between strength and power on one side, and weakness and pretence on the other, it is impossible that the opposite parts should be demonstrations, or seem so, to the same man. And this appears by this also, that some propositions, which are only proved by a conjugation of probable inducements, have yet obtained as certain and as regular events as a natural demonstration, and are believed equally, constantly, and perpetually, by all wise men ; and the understanding does regularly receive the

same impression, and give the same assent, and for ever draws forth the same conclusions, when it is not abused with differing prejudices and pre-occupations, when its liberty and powers are not enfeebled with customs, example, and contrary breeding, while it is not bribed by interest, or hurried away by passion.

Of this I shall choose to give one instance, which, as it is of the greatest concernment in the world in itself, so the gay impieties and bold wits of the world who are witty against none more than God and God's wisdom, have made it now to be but too seasonable; and that is, that the religion of Jesus Christ, or the Christian religion, is from God; concerning which I will not now pretend to bring in all the particulars, whereby each part of it can be verified, but, by heaping together such heads of probabilities, which are or may be the cause of an infinite persuasion; and this I had rather choose to do for these reasons:—

1. Because many men, excellently learned, have already discoursed largely of the truth of Christianity, and approved, by a direct and close congression with other religions, by examination of the contrary pretences, refutation of their *arguments*, answering their objections, and have

by direct force so far prevailed, that all the reason of the world appears to stand on the Christian side : and for me to do it now can neither be useful nor necessary.

2. In that way of arguing, every man that is an adversary can answer one argument, and some can reprove many, and none can prevail singly to possess all the understanding, and to fill all the corners of consideration ; but in a moral demonstration that can be supplied.

3. In the other way, an adversary supposes himself to prevail, when he can answer the arguments singly ; and the discourses, in that method, are like the servants sent singly to gather fruits of the husbandmen ; they killed them as fast as they came ; and a man may kill a whole kingdom over, if the opponents come by single persons : but a moral demonstration is like an army, which can lose single persons and yet prevail, but yet cannot be beaten unless it be beaten as a whole.

4. The few little things, that atheistical persons prate against the holy Jesus and his most excellent religion, are infinitely outweighed by the multitude and variety of things to be said for it ; and let the others stand, (as if they meet with persons that cannot answer them,) yet they

are sure this greater ought to prevail, because it possesses all the corners of reason, and meets with every instance, and complies with the manner of a man, and is fitted to the nature of things, and complies with the will, and persuades the understanding, and is a guard against the tricks of sophisters, and does not only effect its purpose by direct influence, but is secured by reflection upon itself, and does more by its indirect strength, and by a back blow, than by its first operations ; and therefore,

This instance, and this way of argument, may be of more use to those persons who cannot so dispute, but that they are apt to be abused by little things, by talkings and imperfect arguings ; it may be a defensative against trifling objections, and the impious pratings of the witty fools, while the men are armed by love, and prudence, and wise securities to stand with confidence and piety against talkings and intrigues of danger ; for by this way best, "wisdom is justified of all her children."

A

MORAL DEMONSTRATION

OF THE

TRUTH OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

THIS discourse, of all the disputables in the world, shall require the fewest things to be granted; even nothing but what was evident; even nothing but the very subject of the question, namely, that there was such a man as Jesus Christ; that he pretended such things, and taught such doctrines: for he that will prove these things to be from God must be allowed that they were from something or other.

But this postulate I do not ask for need, but for order's sake, and art; for what the histories of that age reported as a public affair, as one of the most eminent transactions of the world, that which made so much noise, which caused so many changes, which occasioned so many wars,

which divided so many hearts, which altered so many families, which procured so many deaths, which obtained so many laws in favour, and suffered so many rescripts in the disfavour, of itself; that which was not done in a corner, but was thirty-three years and more in acting; which caused so many sects, and was opposed by so much art and so much power that it might not grow; which filled the world with noise, which effected such great changes in the bodies of men by curing the diseased, and smiting the contumacious or the hypocrites; which drew so many eyes, and filled so many tongues, and employed so many pens, and was the care and the question of the whole world at that time, and immediately after; that which was consigned by public acts and records of courts, which was in the books of friends and enemies, which came accompanied and remarked with eclipses and stars and prodigies of heaven and earth; that which the Jews even in spite and against their wills confessed, and which the witty adversaries, intending to overthrow, could never so much as challenge of want of truth in the matter of fact and story; that which they who are infinitely concerned that it should not be believed, or more, *that it had* never been, do yet only labour to

make to appear not to have been divine: certainly, this thing is so certain that it was, that the defenders of it need not account it a kindness to have it presupposed; for never was any story in the world that had so many degrees of credibility, as the story of the person, life, and death of Jesus Christ: and if he had not been a true Prophet, yet that he was in the world, and said and did such things, cannot be denied; for even concerning Mahomet we make no question but he was in the world, and led a great part of mankind after him, and what was less proved we infinitely believe: and what all men say, and no man denies, and was notorious in itself, of this we may make further inquiries whether it was all that which it pretended; for that it did make pretences and was in the world, needs no more probation.

But now, whether Jesus Christ was sent from God and delivered the will of God, we are to take accounts from all the things of the world which were ON him, or ABOUT him, or FROM him.

SECTION I.

CONSIDERATIONS RESPECTING THE PERSON OF JESUS
CHRIST.

CONSIDER, first, his PERSON: he was foretold by all the Prophets: he, I say; for that appears by the event, and the correspondencies of their sayings to his person: he was described by infallible characterisms, which did fit him, and did never fit any but him; for, when he was born, then was the fulness of time, and the Messiah was expected at the time when Jesus did appear, which gave occasion to many of the godly then to wait for him, and to hope to live till the time of his revelation: and they did so, and with a spirit of prophecy, which their own nation did confess and honour, glorified God at the revelation: and the most excellent and devout persons that were conspicuous for their piety did then rejoice in him, and confess him; and the expectation of him at that time was so public and famous, that it gave occasion to divers impostors to abuse the credulity of the people, in pretending to be the Messiah; but not only the predictions of the time, and the perfect synchronisms, *did point* him out, but at his birth a strange

star appeared, which guided certain Levantine Princes and sages to the inquiry after him ; a strange star, which had an irregular place, and an irregular motion, that came by design, and acted by counsel, the counsel of the almighty Guide, it moved from place to place, till it stood just over the house where the babe did sleep ; a star, of which the Heathen knew much, who knew nothing of him ; a star which Chalcidius affirmed to have signified the descent of God for the salvation of man ; a star that guided the wise Chaldees to worship him with gifts, as the same disciple of Plato does affirm, and as the holy Scriptures deliver : and this star could be no secret ; it troubled all the country ; it put Herod upon strange arts of security for his kingdom ; it effected a sad tragedy accidentally, for it occasioned the death of all the little babes in the city and neighbourhood of Bethlehem. But the birth of this young child, which was thus glorified by a star, was also signified by an angel, and was effected by the Holy Spirit of God, in a manner which was in itself supernatural : a virgin was his mother, and God was his Father, and his beginning was miraculous ; and this matter of his birth of a virgin was proved to an interested and jealous person, even to Joseph, the supposed

father of Jesus ; it was affirmed publicly by all his family, and by all his disciples, and published in the midst of all his enemies, who by no artifice could reprove it ; a matter so famous, that when it was urged as an argument to prove Jesus to be the Messias, by the force of a prophecy in Isaiah, " A virgin shall conceive a son," they who obstinately refused to admit him did not deny the matter of fact, but denied that it was so meant by the Prophet, which, if it were true, can only prove that Jesus was more excellent than was foretold by the Prophets, but that there was nothing less in him than was to be in the Messias ; it was a matter so famous, that the Arabian Physicians, who can affirm no such things of their Mahomet, and yet not being able to deny it to be true of the holy Jesus, endeavour to elevate and lessen the thing, by saying, " It is not wholly beyond the force of nature, that a virgin should conceive ;" so that it was on all hands undeniable, that the mother of Jesus was a virgin, a mother without a man.

This is that Jesus, at whose presence, before he was born, a babe in his mother's belly also did leap for joy ; who was also a person extraordinary himself, conceived in his mother's old age, after a long barrenness, signified by an angel

in the temple, to his father officiating his priestly office; who was also struck dumb for his not present believing: all the people saw it, and all his kindred were witnesses of his restitution; and he was named by the angel, and his office declared to be the forerunner of the holy Jesus; and this also was foretold by one of the old Prophets; for the whole story of this divine person is a chain of providence and wonder, every link of which is a verification of a prophecy, and all of it is that thing which, from Adam to the birth of Jesus, was pointed at and hinted by all the Prophets, whose words in him passed perfectly into the event.

This is that Jesus, who, as he was born without a father, so he was learned without a master; he was a man without age, a doctor in a child's garment, disputing in the sanctuary at twelve years old. He was a sojourner in Egypt, because the poor babe, born of an indigent mother, was a formidable rival to a potent King; and this fear could not come from the design of the infant, but must needs arise from the illustriousness of the birth, and the prophecies of the child, and the sayings of the learned, and the journey of the wise men, and the decrees of God; this journey and the return were both managed by the con-

duct of an angel and a divine dream ; for to the Son of God all the angels did rejoice to minister.

This blessed person—made thus excellent by his Father, and glorious by miraculous consignations, and illustrious by the ministry of heavenly spirits, and proclaimed to Mary and to Joseph by two angels, to the shepherds by a multitude of the heavenly host, to the wise men by a prophecy, Psalm lxxii. 10, 11, and by a star, to the Jews by the shepherds, to the Gentiles by the three wise men, to Herod by the doctors of the law, and to himself perfectly known by the enchainings his human nature in the bosom and heart of God, and by the fulness of the Spirit of God—was yet pleased for thirty years together to live an humble, a laborious, a chaste and a devout, a regular and an even, a wise and an exemplar, a pious and an obscure, life, without complaint, without sin, without design of fame, or grandeur of spirit, till the time came that the clefts of the rock were to open, and the diamond give its lustre, and be worn in the diadems of Kings : and then this person was wholly admirable ; for he was ushered into the world by the voice of a loud crier in the wilderness, a person austere and wise, of a strange life, full of holiness *and full of hardness*, and a great Preacher of

righteousness ; a man believed by all the people that he came from God ; one who in his own nation gathered disciples publicly, and (which amongst them was a great matter) he was the doctor of a new institution, and baptized all the country ; yet this man, so great, so revered, so followed, so listened to by King and people, by doctors and by idiots, by Pharisees and Sadducees, this man preached Jesus to the people, pointed out the Lamb of God, told that he must increase, and himself from all that fame must retire to give him place ; he received him to baptism, after having with duty and modesty declared his own unworthiness to give, but rather a worthiness to receive baptism from the holy hands of Jesus ; but at the solemnity God sent down the Holy Spirit upon his holy Son, and by a voice from heaven, a voice of thunder (and God was in that voice) declared that this was his Son, and that he was delighted in him.

This voice from heaven was such, so evident, so certain a conviction of what it did intend to prove, so known and accepted as the way of divine revelation under the second temple, that at that time every man that desired a sign honestly would have been satisfied with such a voice ; it being the testimony, by which God made all

extraordinaries to be credible to his people, from the days of Ezra to the death of the nation ; and that there was such a voice, not only then, but divers times after, was as certain, and made as evident, as things of that nature can ordinarily be made. For it being a matter of fact, cannot be supposed infinite, but limited to time and place, heard by a certain number of persons, and was as a clap of thunder upon ordinary accounts, which could be heard but by those who were within the sphere of its own activity ; and reported by those to others, who are to give testimony, as testimonies are required, which are credible under the test of two or three disinterested, honest, and true men ; and though this was done in the presence of more, and oftener than once, yet it was a divine testimony but at first, but is to be conveyed by the means of men ; and as God thundered from heaven at the giving of the law, (though that he did so, we have notice only from the books of Moses, received from the Jewish nation,) so he did in the days of the Baptist, and so he did to Peter, James, and John, and so he did in the presence of the Pharisees and many of the common people ; and, as it is not to be supposed that all these would join their *divided* interests, for and against themselves, for

the verification of a lie ; so, if they would have done it, they could not have done it without reproof of their own parties, who would have been glad by the discovery only to disgrace the whole story. But, if the report of honest and just men so reputed, may be questioned for matter of fact, or may not be accounted sufficient to make faith, when there is no pretence of men to the contrary, besides, that we can have no story transmitted to us, no records kept, no acts of courts, no narratives of the days of old, no traditions of our fathers ; so there could not be left in nature any usual instrument, whereby God could, after the manner of men, declare his own will to us, but either we should never know the will of heaven upon earth, or it must be, that God must not only tell it once, but always, and not only always to some men, but always to all men ; and then, as there would be no use of history, or the honesty of men, and their faithfulness in telling any act of God in declaration of his will ; so there would be perpetual necessity of miracles, and we could not serve God directly with our understanding ; for there would be no such thing as faith, that is, of assent without conviction of understanding, and we could not please God with believing, because there would be in it

nothing of the will, nothing of love and choice ; and that faith which is, would be like that of Thomas, to believe what we see or hear, and God should not at all govern upon earth, unless he did continually come himself: for thus, all government, all teachers, all Apostles, all messengers would be needless, because they could not show to the eye what they told to the ears of men ; and it might as well be disbelieved in all courts and by all Princes, that this was not the letter of a Prince, or the act of a man, or the writing of his hand, and so all human intercourse must cease, and all senses but the eye be useless as to this affair, or else to the ear all voices must be strangers but the principal,—if, I say, no reports shall make faith. But it is certain, that when these voices were sent from heaven and heard upon earth, they prevailed amongst many that heard them not, and disciples were multiplied upon such accounts ; or else it must be that none that did hear them could be believed by any of their friends and neighbours ; for, if they were, the voice was as effective at the reflex and rebound, as in the direct emission, and could prevail with them that believed their brother or their friend, as certainly as with them *that believed their own ears and eyes.*

I need not speak of the vast numbers of miracles which he wrought; miracles which were not more demonstrations of his power than of his mercy; for they had nothing of pompousness and ostentation, but infinitely of charity and mercy, and that permanent and lasting and often. He opened the eyes of the blind, he made the crooked straight, he made the weak strong, he cured fevers with the touch of his hand, and an issue of blood with the hem of his garment, and sore eyes with the spittle of his mouth and the clay of the earth; he multiplied the loaves and fishes, he raised the dead to life, a young maiden, the widow's son of Nain, and Lazarus, and cast out devils by the word of his mouth; which he could never do, but by the power of God. For Satan does not cast out Satan, nor a house fight against itself, if it means to stand long; and the devil could not help Jesus, because the holy Jesus taught men virtue, called them from the worshipping devils, taught them to resist the devil, to lay aside all those abominable idolatries by which the devil doth rule in the hearts of men; he taught men to love God, to fly from temptations to sin, to hate and avoid all those things of which the devil is guilty; for Christianity forbids pride, envy, malice, lying, and yet

affirms that the devil is proud, envious, malicious, and the father of lies; and therefore, wherever Christianity prevails, the devil is not worshipped; and therefore, he that can think that a man without the power of God could overturn the devil's principles, cross his designs, weaken his strengths, baffle him in his policies, befool him and turn him out of possession, and make him open his own mouth against himself, as he did often, and confess himself conquered by Jesus, and tormented, as the oracle did to Augustus Cæsar, and the devil to Jesus himself; he, I say, that thinks a mere man can do this, knows not the weaknesses of a man, nor the power of an angel; but he that thinks this could be done by compact, and by consent of the devil, must think him to be an intelligence without understanding, a power without force, a fool and a sot, to assist a power against himself, and to persecute the power he did assist, to stir up the world to destroy the Christians, whose Master and Lord he did assist to destroy himself; and when we read that Porphyrius,* an Heathen, a professed enemy to Christianity, did say, *Ἰησοῦ τιμωμένοις τις θεῶν δημοσίας ὠφελείας οὐκ ᾔσθετο*, that

* EUSEB., lib. v., c. 1, *Præp. Evang.*

since Jesus was worshipped, the gods could help no man, that is, the gods which they worshipped; the poor baffled enervated demons; he must either think that the devils are as foolish as they are weak, or else, that they did nothing towards this declination of their power; and therefore that they suffer it by a power higher than themselves, that is, by the power of God in the hand of Jesus.

But, besides that God gave testimony from heaven concerning him, he also gave this testimony of himself to have come from God, because that he did God's will; for he that is a good man, and lives, by the laws of God and of his nation, a life innocent and simple, prudent and wise, holy and spotless, unreprieved and unsuspected, he is certainly, by all wise men, said in a good sense to be the son of God; but he who does well and speaks well, and calls all men to glorify and serve God, and serves no ends but of holiness and charity, of wisdom of hearts and reformation of manners, this man carries great authority in his sayings, and ought to prevail with good men in good things, for good ends, which is all that is here required.

But his nature was so sweet, his manners so humble, his words so wise and composed, his

comportment so grave and winning, his answers so seasonable, his questions so deep, his reproof so severe and charitable, his pity so great and merciful, his preachings so full of reason and holiness, of weight and authority, his conversation so useful and beneficent, his poverty great, but his alms frequent; his family so holy and religious; his and their employment so profitable; his meekness so incomparable; his passions without difference, save only where zeal or pity carried him on to worthy and apt expressions; a person that never laughed, but often wept in a sense of the calamities of others; he loved every man, and hated no man; he gave counsel to the doubtful, and instructed the ignorant; he bound up the broken hearts, and strengthened the feeble knees, he relieved the poor, and converted the sinners; he despised none that came to him for relief, and as for those that did not, he went to them; he took all occasions of mercy that were offered him, and went abroad for more; he spent his days in preaching and healing, and his nights in prayers and conversation with God; he was obedient to laws, and subject to Princes, though he was the Prince of Judea in right of his mother, and of all the *world* in right of his Father; the people followed

him, but he made no conventions ; and when they were made, he suffered no tumults ; when they would have made him a King, he withdrew himself ; when he knew they would put him to death, he offered himself ; he knew men's hearts, and conversed secretly, and gave answer to their thoughts, and prevented their questions ; he would work a miracle rather than give offence, and yet suffer every offence rather than see God his Father dishonoured ; he exactly kept the law of Moses, to which he came to put a period, and yet chose to signify his purpose only by doing acts of mercy upon their Sabbath, doing nothing which they could call a breach of a commandment, but healing sick people, a charity which themselves would do to beasts, and yet they were angry at him for doing it to their brethren.

In all his life, and in all his conversation with his nation, he was innocent as an angel of light ; and when, by the greatness of his worth, and the severity of his doctrine, and the charity of his miracles, and the noises of the people, and his immense fame in all that part of the world, and the multitude of his disciples, and the authority of his sermons, and his free reproof of their hypocrisy, and his discovery of their false doc-

trines and weak traditions, he had branded the reputation of the vicious rulers of the people, and they resolved to put him to death, they who had the biggest malice in the world, and the weakest accusations, were forced to supply their want of articles against him by making truth to be his fault, and his office to be his crime, and his open confession of what was asked him to be his article of condemnation ; and yet after all this they could not persuade the competent judge to condemn him, or to find him guilty of any fault, and therefore they were forced to threaten him with Cæsar's name, against whom then they would pretend him to be an enemy, though in their charge they neither proved, nor indeed laid it against him ; and yet to whatsoever they objected, he made no return, but his silence and his innocence were remarkable and evident, without labour and reply, and needed no more argument than the sun needs an advocate to prove that he is the brightest star in the firmament.

Well, so it was; they crucified him ; and, when they did, they did as much put out the eye of heaven as destroy the Son of God ; for, when with an incomparable sweetness, and a *patience* exemplar to all ages of sufferers, he

endured affronts, examinations, scorns, insolencies of rude ungentle tradesmen, cruel whippings, injurious, unjust, and unreasonable usages from those whom he obliged by all the arts of endearment and offers of the biggest kindness : at last he went to death, as to the work which God appointed him, that he might become the world's sacrifice, and the great example of holiness, and the instance of representing by what way the world was to be made happy ; (even by sufferings, and so entering into heaven ;) that he might, I say, become the Saviour of his enemies, and the elder brother to his friends, and the Lord of glory, and the fountain of its emanation. Then it was, that God gave new testimonies from heaven. The sun was eclipsed all the while he was upon the cross ; and yet the moon was in the full ; that is, he lost his light, not because any thing in nature did invest him, but because the God of nature (as a Heathen at that very time confessed, who yet saw nothing of this sad iniquity) did suffer. The rocks did rend, the veil of the temple divided of itself, and opened the enclosures, and disparked the sanctuary, and made it pervious to the Gentile's eye ; the dead arose, and appeared in Jerusalem to their friends ; the Centurion and divers of the

people smote their hearts, and were by these strange indications convinced that he was the Son of God. His garments were parted, and lots cast upon his inward coat; they gave him vinegar and gall to drink, they brake not a bone of him, but they pierced his side with a spear, looking upon him whom they had pierced; according to the prophecies of him, which were so clear and descended to minutes and circumstances of his passion, that there was nothing left by which they could doubt whether this were he or no who was to come into the world. But after all this, that all might be finally verified, and no scruple left, after three days' burial, a great stone being rolled to the face of the grave, and the stone sealed, and a guard of soldiers placed about it, he arose from the grave, and for forty days together conversed with his followers and disciples, and beyond all suspicion was seen of five hundred brethren at once,—which is a number too great to give their consent and testimony to a lie, and, it being so publicly and confidently affirmed at the very time it was done, and for ever after urged by all Christians, used as the most mighty demonstration, proclaimed, preached, talked of, even upbraided to the gainsayers, *affirmed* by eye-witnesses, persuaded to the kin-

dred and friends and the relatives and companions of all those five hundred persons who were eye-witnesses, it is infinitely removed from a reasonable suspicion ; and at the end of those days was taken up into heaven in the sight of many of them, as Elias was in the presence of Elisha.

Now he of whom all these things are true, must needs be more than a mere man ; and, that they were true, was affirmed by very many eye-witnesses, men who were innocent, plain men, men that had no bad ends to serve ; men that looked for no preferment by the thing in this life ; men to whom their Master told they were to expect, not crowns and sceptres, not praise of men or wealthy possessions, not power and ease, but a voluntary casting away care and attendance upon secular affairs, that they might attend their ministry ; poverty and prisons, trouble and vexation, persecution and labour, whippings and banishment, bonds and death ; and for a reward they must stay till a good day came, but that was not to be at all in this world ; and, when the day of restitution and recompence should come, they should never know till it came, but upon the hope of this and the faith of Jesus, and the word of God so taught, so consigned, they must rely wholly and for ever.

Now, let it be considered, how could matters of fact be proved better? and how could this be any thing, but such as to rely upon matters of fact? what greater certainty can we have of any thing that was ever done which we saw not, or heard not, but by the report of wise and honest persons? especially, since they were such whose life and breeding were so far from ambition and pompousness, that, as they could not naturally and reasonably hope for any great number of proselytes, so the fame that could be hoped for amongst them, as it must be a matter of their own procuring, and consequently uncertain, so it must needs be very inconsiderable, not fit to outweigh the danger and the loss, nor yet at all valuable by them whose education and pretences were against it. These we have plentifully. But if these men are numerous and united, it is more. Then we have more; for so many did affirm these things which they saw and heard, that thousands of people were convinced of the truth of them. But then, if these men offer their oath, it is yet more; but yet not so much as we have, for they sealed those things with their blood; they gave their life for a testimony; and what reward can any man expect, if he gives his life for a lie? Who shall make

him recompence, or what can tempt him to do it knowingly? But, after all, it is to be remembered, that as God hates lying, so he hates incredulity; as we must not believe a lie, so neither stop up our eyes and ears against truth; and what we do every minute of our lives in matters of little and of great concernment, if we refuse to do in our religion, (which yet is to be conducted as other human affairs are, by human instruments and arguments of persuasion, proper to the nature of the thing,) it is an obstinacy that is as contrary to human reason as it is to divine faith.

These things relate to the person of the holy Jesus, and prove sufficiently that it was extraordinary; that it was divine; that God was with him; that his power wrought in him; and, therefore, that it was his will which Jesus taught, and God signed. But then, if nothing of all this had been, yet even the doctrine itself proves itself divine and to come from God.

SECTION II.

CONSIDERATIONS RESPECTING THE DOCTRINE OF JESUS
CHRIST.

For it is a doctrine perfective of human nature, that teaches us to love God and to love one another ; to hurt no man, and to do good to every man ; it propines * to us the noblest, the highest and the bravest pleasures of the world ; the joys of charity, the rest of innocence, the peace of quiet spirits, the wealth of beneficence, and forbids us only to be beasts and to be devils ; it allows all that God and nature intended, and only restrains the excrescences of nature, and forbids us to take pleasure in that which is the only entertainment of devils, in murders and revenges, malice and spiteful words and actions ; it permits corporal pleasures, where they can best minister to health and societies, to conservation of families and honour of communities ; it teaches men to keep their words, that themselves may be secured in all their just interests,

* *Propines*, an elegant word, not now in use. It is from the Latin verb *propinare*, and means "to offer in kindness," as when we drink to any one, and present the cup to him, to drink after us.—EDIT.

and to do good to others, that good may be done to them ; it forbids biting one another, that we may not be devoured by one another ; and commands obedience to superiors, that we may not be ruined in confusion ; it combines governments, and confirms all good laws, and makes peace, and opposes and prevents wars where they are not just, and where they are not necessary. It is a religion that is life and spirit, not consisting in ceremonies and external amusements, but in the services of the heart, and the real fruit of lips and hands, that is, of good words and good deeds ; it bids us to do that to God which is agreeable to his excellencies, that is, worship him with the best thing we have, and make all things else minister to it ; it bids us do, that to our neighbour, by which he may be better : it is the perfection of the natural law, and agreeable to our natural necessities, and promotes our natural ends and designs ; it does not destroy reason, but instructs it in very many things, and complies with it in all ; it hath in it both heat and light, and is not more effectual than it is beautiful ; it promises every thing that we can desire, and yet promises nothing but what it does effect ; it proclaims war against all vices, and generally does command every

virtue ; it teaches us with ease to mortify those affections which reason durst scarce reprove, because she hath not strength enough to conquer ; and it does create in us those virtues which reason of herself never knew, and, after they are known, could never approve sufficiently : it is a doctrine in which nothing is superfluous or burdensome ; nor yet is there any thing wanting, which can procure happiness to mankind, or by which God can be glorified : and, if wisdom, and mercy, and justice, and simplicity, and holiness, and purity, and meekness, and contentedness, and charity, be images of God and rays of Divinity, then that doctrine, in which all these shine so gloriously, and in which nothing else is ingredient, must needs be from God ; and that all this is true in the doctrine of Jesus, needs no other probation, but the reading the words.

For, that the words of Jesus are contained in the Gospels, that is, in the writings of them who were eye-witnesses and ear-witnesses of the actions and sermons of Jesus, is not at all to be doubted ; for in every sect we believe their own records of doctrine and institution : for it is madness to suppose the Christians to pretend to be servants of the laws of Jesus, and yet to *make a law of their own which he made not :*

no man doubts but that the Alcoran is the law of Mahomet, that the Old Testament contains the religion of the Jews : and the authority of these books is proved by all the arguments of the religion ; for all the arguments persuading to the religion are intended to prove no other, than is contained in those books : and, these having been for fifteen hundred years and more, received absolutely by all Christian assemblies, if any man shall offer to make a question of their authority, he must declare his reasons, for the disciples of the religion have sufficient presumption, security, and possession, till they can be reasonably disturbed ; but that now they can never be, is infinitely certain, because we have a long, immemorial, universal tradition that these books were written in those times by those men whose names they bear ; they were accepted by all churches at the very first notice, except some few of the later, which were first received by some churches, and then consented to by all ; they were acknowledged by the same and by the next age for genuine, their authority published, their words cited, appeals made to them in all questions of religion, because it was known and confessed that they wrote nothing but that they knew, so that they were not

deceived ; and to say, they would lie, must be made to appear by something extrinsical to this inquiry, and was never so much as plausibly pretended by any adversaries, and it being a matter of another man's will, must be declared by actions, or not at all.

But, besides, the men that wrote them were to be believed, because they did miracles, they wrote prophecies, which are verified by the event,—persons were cured at their sepulchres, a thing so famous that it was confessed even by the enemies of the religion ; and, after all, that which the world ought to rely upon is the wisdom, and the providence, and the goodness of God ; all which it concerned to take care that the religion which himself so adorned and proved by miracles and mighty signs should not be lost, nor any false writings be obtruded instead of true, lest, without our fault, the will of God become impossible to be obeyed.

But to return to the thing : all those excellent things, which singly did make famous so many sects of philosophers, and remarked so many Princes of their sects, all them united, and many more, which their eyes, *ομματα νυκτεριδων*, “dark and dim,” could not see, are heaped together in this system of wisdom and holiness.

Here are plain precepts full of deepest mystery, here are the measures of holiness and approaches to God described; obedience and conformity, mortification of the body, and elevations of the spirit, abstractions from earth, and arts of society and union with heaven, degrees of excellencies, and tendencies to perfection, imitations of God, and conversations with him; these are the heights and descents, upon the plain grounds of natural reason and natural religion; for there is nothing commanded but what our reason by nature ought to choose, and yet nothing of natural reason taught but what is heightened and made more perfect by the Spirit of God; and, when there is any thing in the religion that is against flesh and blood, it is only when flesh and blood is against us, and against reason, when flesh and blood either would hinder us from great felicity, or bring us into great misery. To conclude: it is such a law that nothing can hinder men to receive and entertain, but a pertinacious baseness and love to vice, and none can receive it but those who resolve to be good and excellent; and, if the holy Jesus had come into the world with less splendour of power and mighty demonstrations, yet even the excellency of what he taught

makes him alone fit to be the Master of the world.

SECTION III.

CONSIDERATIONS RESPECTING THE EFFECT, AND THE INSTRUMENTS, OF CHRIST'S RELIGION.

BUT then let us consider what this excellent person did effect, and with what instruments he brought so great things to pass. He was to put a period to the rites of Moses, and the religion of the temple, of which the Jews were zealous even unto pertinacy; to reform the manners of all mankind, to confound the wisdom of the Greeks, to break in pieces the power of the devil, to destroy the worship of all false gods, to pull down their oracles, and change their laws, and by principles wise and holy to reform the false discourses of the world.

But see what was to be taught,—a Trinity in the unity of the Godhead, *τρια ἐν, καὶ ἐν τρια*, that is the Christian arithmetic, “three are one, and one are three;” so Lucian in his “*Philopatris*,” or *some other*, derides the Christian doctrine: see

their philosophy, *Ex nihilo nihil fit*. No : *Ex nihilo omnia*, "all things are made of nothing ;" and a Man-God and a God-Man, the same person finite and infinite, born in time and yet from all eternity, the Son of God but yet born of a woman, and she a maid but yet a mother ; resurrection of the dead, reunion of soul and body ; this was part of the Christian physics, or their natural philosophy.

But then certainly "their moral was easy and delicious." It is so indeed ; but not to flesh and blood, whose appetites it pretends to regulate or to destroy, to restrain or else to mortify : fasting, and penance, and humility, loving our enemies, restitution of injuries, and self-denial, and taking up the cross, and losing all our goods, and giving our life for Jesus : as the other was hard to believe, so this is as hard to do.

But for whom and under whose conduct was all this to be believed, and all this to be done, and all this to be suffered ? Surely, for some glorious and mighty Prince, whose splendour as far outshines the Roman empire, as the jewels of Cleopatra outshined the swaddling clothes of the babe at Bethlehem. No, it was not so neither. For all this was for Jesus, whom his followers preached ; a poor babe, born in a stable, the son

of a carpenter, cradled in a cratch, swaddled in poor clouts ; it was for him whom they indeed called a God, but yet whom all the world knew, and they themselves said, was whipped at a post, nailed to a cross ; he fell under the malice of the Jews his countrymen, and the power of his Roman lords, a cheap and a pitiful sacrifice, without beauty and without splendour.

The design is great, but does not yet seem possible : but therefore let us see what instruments the holy Jesus chose, to effect these so mighty changes, to persuade so many propositions, to endear so great sufferings, to overcome so great enemies, to master so many impossibilities which this doctrine and this law from this Master were sure to meet withal.

Here, here it is that the divinity of the power is proclaimed. When a man goes to war, he raises as great an army as he can to outnumber his enemy ; but, when God fights, three hundred men, that lap like a dog, are sufficient ; nay, one word can dissolve the greatest army. He that means to effect any thing must have means of his own proportionable ; and if they be not, he must fail, or derive them from the mighty. See then with what instruments the holy Jesus sets *upon this great reformation of the world.*

Twelve men, of obscure and poor birth, of contemptible trades and quality, without learning, without breeding : these men were sent into the midst of a knowing and wise world; to dispute with the most famous philosophers of Greece, to outwit all the learning of Athens, to outpreach all the Roman orators ; to introduce into a newly-settled empire, which would be impatient of novelties and change, such a change as must destroy all their temples, or remove thence all their gods : against which change all the zeal of the world, and all the passions, and all the seeming pretences which they could make, must needs be violently opposed : a change, that introduced new laws, and caused them to reverse the old, to change that religion under which their fathers long did prosper, and under which the Roman empire obtained so great a grandeur, for a religion which in appearance was silly and humble, meek and peaceable, not apt indeed to do harm, but exposing men to all the harm in the world ; abating their courage, blunting their swords, teaching peace and unactiveness, and making the soldiers' arms in a manner useless, and untying their military girdle : a religion which contradicted their reasons of state, and erected new judicatories, and made the Roman courts to be

silent and without causes ; a religion that gave countenance to the poor and pitiful, but, in a time when riches were adored, and ambition esteemed the greatest nobleness, and pleasure thought to bet he chiefest good, it brought no peculiar blessing to the rich or mighty, unless they would become poor and humble in some real sense or other ; a religion that would change the face of things, and would also pierce into the secrets of the soul, and unravel all the intrigues of hearts, and reform all evil manners, and break vile habits into gentleness and counsel : that such a religion in such a time, preached by such mean persons, should triumph over the philosophy of the world, and the arguments of the subtle, and the sermons of the eloquent, and the power of Princes, and the interest of states, and the inclinations of nature, and the blindness of zeal, and the force of custom, and the pleasures of sin, and the busy arts of the devil ; that is, against wit, and power, and money, and religion, and wilfulness, and fame, and empire, which are all the things in the world that can make a thing impossible ; this, I say, could not be by the proper force of such instruments ; for no man can span heaven with an infant's palm, nor govern wise empires with diagrams.

It were impudence to send a footman to com-

mand Cæsar to lay down his arms, to disband his legions, and throw himself into Tiber, or keep a tavern next to Pompey's theatre ; but, if a sober man shall stand alone, unarmed, undefended, or unprovided, and shall tell that he will make the sun stand still, or remove a mountain, or reduce Xerxes's army to the scantling of a single troop, he that believes he will and can do this, must believe he does it by a higher power than he can yet perceive ; and so it was in the present transaction. For that the holy Jesus made invisible powers to do him visible honours, that his Apostles hunted the demons from their tripods, their navels, their dens, their hollow pipes, their temples, and their altars ; that he made the oracles silent, as Lucian, Porphyry, Celsus, and other Heathens confess ; that, against the order of new things, which, let them be never so profitable or good, do yet suffer reproach, and cannot prevail unless they commence in a time of advantage and favour ; yet, that this should flourish like the palm by pressure, grow glorious by opposition, thrive by persecution, and was demonstrated by objections, argues a higher cause than the immediate instrument. Now how this higher cause did intervene is visible and notorious : the Apostles were not learned,

but the holy Jesus promised that he would send down wisdom from above, from the Father of spirits ; they had no power, but they should be invested with power from on high ; they were ignorant and timorous, but he would make them learned and confident, and so he did : he promised that in a few days he would send the Holy Ghost upon them, and he did so ; after ten days they felt and saw glorious immission from heaven, lights of movable fire sitting upon their heads, and that light did illuminate their hearts, and the mighty rushing wind inspired them with a power of speaking divers languages, and brought to their remembrances all that Jesus did and taught, and made them wise to conduct souls, and bold to venture, and prudent to advise, and powerful to do miracles, and witty to convince gainsayers, and hugely instructed in the Scriptures, and gave them the spirit of government, and the spirit of prophecy.

This thing was so public, that at the first notice of it three thousand souls were converted on that very day, at the very time when it was done ; for it was certainly a visible demonstration of an invisible power, that ignorant persons who were never taught should in an instant speak all the languages of the Roman empire ;

and indeed this thing was so necessary to be so, and so certain that it was so, so public, and so evident, and so reasonable, and so useful, that it is not easy to say whether it was the indication of a greater power, or a greater wisdom ; and now the means was proportionable enough to the biggest end ; without learning, they could not confute the learned world, but therefore God became their teacher ; without power, they could not break the devil's violence, but therefore God gave them power ; without courage, they could not contest against all the violence of the Jews and Gentiles, but therefore God was their strength, and gave them fortitude ; without great caution and providence, they could not avoid the traps of crafty persecutors, but therefore God gave them caution, and made them provident, and, as Bezaleel and Aholiab received the Spirit of God, the spirit of understanding, to enable them to work excellently in the tabernacle, so had the Apostles to make them wise for the work of God and the ministries of this diviner tabernacle, "which God pitched, not man."

Immediately upon this, the Apostles, to make a fulness of demonstration and an undeniable conviction, gave the Spirit to others also, to Jews

and Gentiles, and to the men of Samaria, and they spake with tongues and prophesied ; then they preached to all nations, and endured all persecutions, and cured all diseases, and raised the dead to life, and were brought before tribunals, and confessed the name of Jesus, and convinced the blasphemous Jews out of their own Prophets, and not only prevailed upon women and weak men, but even upon the bravest and wisest. All the disciples of John the Baptist, the Nazarenes and Ebionites, Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea, Sergius the President, Dionysius an Athenian Judge, and Polycarpus, Justinus and Irenæus, Athenagoras and Origen, Tertullian and Clemens of Alexandria, who could not be such fools as, upon a matter not certainly true but probably false, to unravel their former principles and to change their liberty for a prison, wealth for poverty, honour for disreputation, life for death, if by such exchange they had not been secured of truth and holiness and the will of God.

But, above all these, was Saul, a bold and a witty, a zealous and learned young man, who, going with letters to persecute the Christians of Damascus, was by a light from heaven called *from his furious march*, reprov'd by God's angel

for persecuting the cause of Jesus, was sent to the city, baptized by a Christian Minister, instructed and sent abroad ; and he became the prodigy of the world, for learning and zeal, for preaching and writing, for labour and sufferance, for government and wisdom ; he was admitted to see the holy Jesus after the Lord was taken into heaven, he was taken up into paradise, he conversed with angels, he saw unspeakable rays of glory ; and besides that himself said it, who had no reason to lie, who would get nothing by it here but a conjugation of troubles, and who should get nothing by it hereafter if it were false ; besides this, I say, that he did all those acts of zeal and obedience for the promotion of the religion, does demonstrate he had reason extraordinary for so sudden a change, so strange a labour, so frequent and incomparable sufferings ; and therefore, as he did and suffered so much upon such glorious motives, so he spared not to publish it to all the world, he spake it to Kings and Princes, he told it to the envious Jews ; he had partners of his journey, who were witnesses of the miraculous accident ; and in his publication he urged the notoriousness of the fact, as a thing not feigned, not private, but done at noon-day under the test of competent

persons ; and it was a thing that proved itself, for it was effective of a present, a great, and a permanent change.

But now it is no new wonder, but a pursuance of the same conjugation of great and divine things, that the fame and religion of Jesus was with so incredible a swiftness scattered over the face of the habitable world, from one end of the earth unto the other : it filled all Asia immediately, it passed presently to Europe, and to the furthest Africans ; and all the way it went it told nothing but a holy and an humble story, that he who came to bring it into the world, died an ignominious death, and yet this death did not take away their courage, but added much ; for they could not fear death for that Master whom they knew to have for their sakes suffered death, and came to life again. But now infinite numbers of persons of both sexes, and all ages, and all countries, came in to the holy crucifix ; and He that was crucified in the reign of Tiberius was in the time of Nero, even in Rome itself, and in Nero's family, by many persons esteemed for a God ; and it was upon public record that he was so acknowledged ; and this was by a Christian, Justin Martyr, urged to the Senate, and to the Emperors themselves, who

if it had been otherwise could easily have confuted the bold allegation of the Christian, who yet did die for that Jesus who was so speedily reputed for a God ; the cross was worn upon breasts, printed in the air, drawn upon foreheads, carried on banners, put upon crowns imperial ; and yet the Christians were sought for to punishments, and exquisite punishments sought forth for them ; their goods were confiscate, their names odious, prisons were their houses, and so many kinds of tortures invented for them that Domitius Ulpianus hath spent seven books in describing the variety of tortures the poor Christian was put to at his first appearing : and yet, in despite of all this, and ten thousand other objections and impossibilities, whatsoever was for them made the religion grow, and whatsoever was against them made it grow ; if they had peace, the religion was prosperous ; if they had persecution, it was still prosperous ; if Princes favoured them, the world came in, because the Christians lived holily ; if Princes were incensed, the world came in, because the Christians died bravely. They sought for death with greediness, they desired to be grinded in the teeth of lions ; and with joy they beheld the wheels and the bended trees, the racks and

the gibbets, the fires and the burning irons, which were like the chair of Elias to them, instruments to carry them to heaven, into the bosom of their beloved Jesus.

Who would not acknowledge the divinity of this person, and the excellency of this institution, that should see infants to weary the hands of hangmen for the testimony of Jesus ; and wise men preach this doctrine for no other visible reward, but shame and death, poverty and banishment ? and hangmen converted by the blood of martyrs, springing upon their faces, which their impious hands and cords have strained through their flesh ? Who would not have confessed the honour of Jesus, when he should see miracles done at the tombs of martyrs, and devils tremble at the mention of the name of Jesus, and the world running to the honour of the poor Nazarene, and Kings and Queens kissing the feet of the poor servants of Jesus ? Could a Jew fisherman and a publican effect all this, for the son of a poor maiden of Judea ? Can we suppose all the world, or so great a part of mankind, can consent by chance or suffer such changes for nothing ? or for any thing less than this ? The son of the poor *maiden* was the Son of God ; and the fishermen

spake by a Divine Spirit ; and they caught the world with holiness and miracles, with wisdom and power bigger than the strength of all the Roman legions. And what can be added to all this, but this thing alone, to prove the divinity of Jesus ?—He is a God, or at least is taught by God, who can foretel future contingencies ; and so did the holy Jesus, and so did his disciples.

Our blessed Lord, while he was alive, foretold that after his death his religion should flourish more than when he was alive ; he foretold persecutions to his disciples ; he foretold the mission of the Holy Ghost to be in a very few days after his ascension, which within ten days came to pass ; he prophesied that the fact of Mary of Bethany, in anointing the head and feet of her Lord, should be public and known as the Gospel itself, and spoken of in the same place ; he foretold the destruction of Jerusalem and the signs of its approach, and that it should be by war, and particularly after the manner of Prophets, symbolically, named the nation should do it, pointing out the Roman eagles ; he foretold his death, and the manner of it, and plainly before-hand published his resurrection, and told them it should be the sign to that generation, namely, the great argument to prove him to be

the Christ ; he prophesied that there should arise false Christs after him, and it came to pass to the extreme great calamity of the nation ; and lastly, he foretold that his beloved disciple St. John should tarry upon the earth till his coming again, that is, to his coming to judgment upon Jerusalem ; and that his religion should be preached to the Gentiles, that it should be scattered over all the world, and be received by all nations ; that it should stay upon the face of the earth till his last coming to judge all the world, and that “the gates of hell should not be able to prevail against his church ;” which prophecy is made good thus long, till this day, and is as a continual argument to justify the divinity of the Author ; the continuance of the religion helps to continue it, for it proves that it came from God, who foretold that it should continue ; and therefore it must continue, because it came from God ; and therefore it came from God, because it does and shall for ever continue, according to the word of the holy Jesus.

But, after our blessed Lord was entered into glory, the disciples also were Prophets. Agabus foretold the dearth that was to be in the Roman empire in the days of Claudius Cæsar, and that *St. Paul* should be bound at Jerusalem ; *St.*

Paul foretold the entering in of heretics into Asia after his departure ; and he and St. Peter and St. Jude, and generally the rest of the Apostles, had two great predictions, which they used not only as a verification of the doctrine of Jesus, but as a means to strengthen the hearts of the disciples, who were so broken with persecution : the one was, that there should arise a sect of vile men, who should be enemies to religion and government, and cause a great apostasy, which happened notoriously in the sect of the Gnostics, which those three Apostles and St. John notoriously and plainly do describe : and the other was, that although the Jewish nation did mightily oppose the religion, it should be but for a while, for they should be destroyed in a short time, and their nation made extremely miserable ; but, for the Christians, if they would fly from Jerusalem and go to Pella, there should not a hair of their head perish ; the verification of this prophecy the Christians extremely longed for, and wondered it stayed so long, and began to be troubled at the delay, and suspected all was not well, when the great proof of their religion was not verified ; and, while they were in thoughts of heart concerning it, the sad catalysis did come, and swept away eleven hundred

thousand of the nation ; and from that day forward the nation was broken in pieces with intolerable calamities ; they are scattered over the face of the earth, and are a vagabond nation ; but yet, like oil in a vessel of wine,—broken into bubbles but kept in their own circles ; and they shall never be an united people, till they are servants of the holy Jesus ; but shall remain without Priest or temple, without altar or sacrifice, without city or country, without the land of promise, or the promise of a blessing, till our Jesus is their High Priest, and the Shepherd to gather them into his fold : and this very thing is a mighty demonstration against the Jews by their own Prophets ; for when Isaiah, and Jeremiah, and Malachi, had prophesied the rejection of the Jews and the calling of the Gentiles, and the change of the old law, and the introduction of a new by the Messias ; that this was He, was therefore certain, because he taught the world a new law, and presently after the publication of this, the old was abrogate, and not only went into desuetude, but into a total abolition among all the world ; and for those of the remnant of the scattered Jews who obstinately blaspheme, the law is become impossible to them, *and they placed in such circumstances that they*

need not dispute concerning its obligation ; for it being external and corporal, ritual and at last made also local, when the circumstances are impossible, the law, that was wholly ceremonial and circumstantial, must needs pass away, and when they have lost their Priesthood, they cannot retain the law, as no man takes care to have his beard shaved, when his head is off.

And it is a wonder to consider how the anger of God is gone out upon that miserable people, and that so great a blindness is fallen upon them ; it being evident and notorious that the Old Testament was nothing but a shadow and umbrage of the New ; that the prophecies of that are plainly verified in this ; that all the predictions of the Messias are most undeniably accomplished in the person of Jesus Christ, so that they cannot with any plausibleness or colour be turned any other way, and be applied to any other person, although the Jews make illiterate allegations, and prodigious dreams, by which they have fooled themselves for sixteen hundred years together, and still hope without reason, and are confident without revelation, and pursue a shadow while they quit the glorious body ; while, in the mean time, the Christian prays for his conversion, and is at rest in the truth of Jesus, and hath

certain unexpressible confidences and internal lights, clarities of the Holy Spirit of God, and loves to the holy Jesus produced in his soul, that he will die when he cannot dispute, and is satisfied, and he knows not how, and is sure by comforts, and comforted by the excellency of his belief, which speaks nothing but holiness, and light, and reason, and peace, and satisfactions infinite, because he is sure that all the world can be happy if they would live by the religion of Jesus, and that neither societies of men nor single persons can have felicity but by this ; and that therefore God, who so decrees to make men happy, hath also decreed that it shall for ever be upon the face of the earth, till the earth itself shall be no more. Amen.

SECTION IV.

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE WEAK PRETENCES OF OTHER RELIGIONS.

Now, if against this vast heap of things any man shall but confront the pretences of any other religion, and see how they fail both of *reason* and holiness, of wonder and divinity ;

how they enter by force, and are kept up by human interests; how ignorant and unholy, how unlearned and pitiful, are their pretences; the darknesses of these must add great eminency to the brightness of that.

For the Jews' religion, which came from heaven, is therefore not now to be practised, because it did come from heaven, and was to expire into the Christian, it being nothing but the image of this perfection: and the Jews needed no other argument but this,—that God hath made theirs impossible now to be done; for he that ties to ceremonies and outward usages, temples and altars, sacrifices and Priests, troublesome and expensive rites and figures of future signification, means that there should be an abode and fixed dwelling; for these are not to be done by an ambulatory people; and, therefore, since God hath scattered the people into atoms and crumbs of society, without temple or Priest, without sacrifice or altar, without Urim or Thummim, without Prophet or vision, even communicating with them no way but by ordinary providence, it is but too evident that God hath nothing to do with them in the matter of that religion; but that it is expired, and no way obligatory to them or pleasing to him, which is become impossible

to be acted : whereas, the Christian religion is as eternal as the soul of a man, and can no more cease than our spirits can die, and can worship upon mountains and caves, in fields and churches, in peace and war, in solitude and society, in persecution and in sunshine, by night and by day, and be solemnized by Clergy and laity in the essential parts of it, and is the perfection of the soul, and the highest reason of man, and the glorification of God.

But, for the heathen religions, it is evidently to be seen, that they are nothing but an abuse of the natural inclination which all men have to worship a god, whom, because they know not, they guess at in the dark ; for that they know there is and ought to be something that hath the care and providence of their affairs. But the body of their religion is nothing but little arts of governments, and stratagems of Princes, and devices to secure the government of new usurpers, or to make obedience to the laws sure, by being sacred, and to make the yoke that was not natural, pleasant by something that is. But yet, for the whole body of it, who sees not, that their worshippings could not be sacred, because they were done by something that is impure ? *They appeased their gods with adulteries and*

impure mixtures, by such things which Cato was ashamed to see, by gluttonous eatings of flesh, and impious drinkings; and they did *litare in humano sanguine*, they sacrificed men and women and children to their demons, as is notorious in the rites of Bacchus Omesta amongst the Greeks, and of Jupiter; to whom a Greek and a Greekess, a Galatian and a Galatess, were yearly offered; in the answers of the oracles to Calchas, as appears in Homer and Virgil. Who sees not, that crimes were warranted by the example of their immortal gods; and that what did dishonour themselves, they sang to the honour of their gods, whom they affirmed to be passionate and proud, jealous and revengeful, amorous and lustful, fearful and impatient, drunken and sleepy, weary and wounded? that the religions were made lasting by policy and force, by ignorance, and the force of custom; by the preferring an inveterate error, and loving of a quiet and prosperous evil; by the arguments of pleasure, and the correspondencies of sensuality; by the fraud of oracles, and the patronage of vices; and because they feared every change as an earthquake, as supposing overturnings of their old error to be the eversion of their well-established governments? And it had been ordina-

rily impossible that ever Christianity should have entered, if the nature and excellency of it had not been such as to enter like rain into a fleece of wool, or the sun into a window, without noise or violence, without emotion and disordering the political constitution, without causing trouble to any man but what his own ignorance or peevishness was pleased to spin out of his own bowels; but did establish governments, secure obedience, made the laws firm, and the persons of Princes to be sacred; it did not oppose force by force, nor strike Princes for justice; it defended itself against enemies by patience, and overcame them by kindness; it was the great instrument of God to demonstrate his power in our weaknesses, and to do good to mankind by the imitation of his excellent goodness.

Lastly: he that considers concerning the religion and person of Mahomet; that he was a vicious person, lustful and tyrannical; that he propounded incredible and ridiculous propositions to his disciples; that it entered by the sword, by blood and violence, by murder and robbery; that it propounded sensual rewards, and allures to compliance by bribing our basest lusts; that it conserves itself by the same means it entered; *that it is* unlearned and foolish, against reason

and the discourses of all wise men ; that it did no miracles, and made false prophecies ; in short, that in the person that founded it, in the article it persuades, in the manner of prevailing, in the reward it offers, it is unholy and foolish and rude : it must needs appear to be void of all pretence ; and that no man of reason can ever be fairly persuaded by arguments, that it is the daughter of God, and came down from heaven.

CONCLUSION.

SINCE therefore there is so nothing to be said for any other religion, and so very much for Christianity, every one of whose pretences can be proved, as well as the things themselves do require, and as all the world expects such things should be proved ; it follows, that the holy Jesus is the Son of God ; that his religion is commanded by God, and is that way by which he will be worshipped and honoured ; and that “there is no other name under heaven by which we can be saved, but only the name of the Lord Jesus.”



A
SHORT AND EASY METHOD
WITH
THE DEISTS.

WHEREIN

THE CERTAINTY OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION IS
DEMONSTRATED BY INFALLIBLE PROOF: FROM
FOUR RULES, WHICH ARE INCOMPATIBLE TO
ANY IMPOSTURE THAT EVER YET HAS BEEN,
OR THAT CAN POSSIBLY BE.

IN A LETTER TO A FRIEND.

BY THE REV. CHARLES LESLIE, M.A.



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A
SHORT AND EASY METHOD
WITH
THE DEISTS.

SIR,

I. IN answer to yours of the third instant, I much condole with you your unhappy circumstances of being placed amongst such company, where, as you say, you continually hear the sacred Scriptures, and the histories therein contained, particularly of Moses and of Christ, and all revealed religion, turned into ridicule by men who set up for sense and reason. And they say, that there is no greater ground to believe in Christ, than in Mahomet: that all these pretences to revelation are cheats, and ever have been among Pagans, Jews, Mahometans, and Christians: that they are all alike impositions of cunning and designing men, upon the credulity, at first, of simple and unthinking people; till, their

numbers increasing, their delusions grow popular, come at last to be established by laws, and then the force of education and custom gives a bias to the judgments of after-ages, till such deceits come really to be believed, being received upon trust from the ages foregoing, without examining into the origin of them ; which these our modern men of sense, as they desire to be esteemed, say that they only do ; that they only have their judgments freed from the slavish authority of precedents and laws, in matters of truth, which they say, ought only to be decided by reason ; though by a prudent compliance with popularity and laws, they preserve themselves from outrage and legal penalties ; for none of their complexion are addicted to sufferings or martyrdom.

Now, Sir, that which you desire from me is, some short topic of reason, if such can be found, whereby, without running to authorities, and the intricate mazes of learning, which breed long disputes, and which these men of reason deny by wholesale, though they can give no reason for it, only suppose that authors have been trumped upon us, interpolated and corrupted, so that no stress can be laid upon them, though *it cannot* be shown wherein they are so cor-

rupted ; which, in reason, ought to lie upon them to prove who allege it ; otherwise it is not only a precarious but a guilty plea : however, you say it makes your disputes endless, and they go away with noise and clamour, and a boast, that there is nothing, at least nothing certain, to be said on the Christian side. Therefore you are desirous to find some one topic of reason, which should demonstrate the truth of the Christian religion, and, at the same time, distinguish it from the impostures of Mahomet and the old pagan world ; that our Deists may be brought to this test, and be either obliged to renounce their reason, and the common reason of mankind, or to submit to the clear proof, from reason, of the Christian religion ; which must be such a proof, as no imposture can pretend to, otherwise it cannot prove the Christian religion not to be an imposture. And whether such a proof, one single proof, (to avoid confusion,) is not to be found out, you desire to know from me.

And you say, that you cannot imagine but there must be such a proof, because every truth is in itself clear and one ; and therefore that one reason for it, if it be the true reason, must be sufficient ; and, if sufficient, it is better than

many, for multiplicity confounds, especially to weak judgments.

Sir, you have imposed a hard task upon me. I wish I could perform it; for though every truth is one, yet our sight is so feeble, that we cannot always come to it directly, but by many inferences, and laying of things together.

But I think that, in the case before us, there is such a proof as you require; and I will set it down as short and plain as I can.

II. First, then, I suppose that the truth of the doctrine of Christ will be sufficiently evinced, if the matters of fact which are recorded of him in the Gospels be true; for his miracles, if true, do vouch the truth of what he delivered.

The same is to be said as to Moses: if he brought the children of Israel through the Red Sea in that miraculous manner which is related in Exodus, and did such other wonderful things as are there told of him, it must necessarily follow, that he was sent from God; these being the strongest proofs we can desire, and which every Deist will confess he would acquiesce in, if he saw them with his eyes. Therefore the whole of this cause will depend upon the proof of these matters of fact.

I. And the method I will take is, first, to lay

down such rules as to the truth of matters of fact in general, that where they all meet, such matters of fact cannot be false. And then, secondly, to show that all these rules do meet in the matters of fact of Moses, and of Christ; and that they do not meet in the matters of fact of Mahomet, of the heathen deities, or can possibly meet in any imposture whatsoever.

2. The rules are these:—(1.) THAT THE MATTER OF FACT BE SUCH AS THAT MEN'S OUTWARD SENSES, THEIR EYES AND EARS, MAY BE JUDGES OF IT. (2.) THAT IT BE DONE PUBLICLY IN THE FACE OF THE WORLD. (3.) THAT NOT ONLY PUBLIC MONUMENTS BE KEPT UP IN MEMORY OF IT, BUT SOME OUTWARD ACTIONS TO BE PERFORMED. (4.) THAT SUCH MONUMENTS AND SUCH ACTIONS OR OBSERVANCES BE INSTITUTED, AND DO COMMENCE FROM THE TIME THAT THE MATTER OF FACT WAS DONE.

3. The two first rules make it impossible for any such matter of fact to be imposed upon men at the time when such matter of fact was said to be done, because every man's eyes and senses would contradict it. For example: suppose any man should pretend that yesterday he divided the Thames in presence of all the people of London, and carried the whole city,

men, women, and children, over to Southwark on dry land, the waters standing like walls on both sides; I say, it is morally impossible that he could persuade the people of London that this was true, when every man, woman, and child could contradict him, and say that this was a notorious falsehood, for that they had not seen the Thames so divided, or had gone over on dry land. Therefore I take it for granted, (and, I suppose, with the allowance of all the Deists in the world,) that no such imposition could be put upon men at the time when such public matter of fact was said to be done.

4. Therefore it only remains, that such matter of fact might be invented some time after, when the men of that generation wherein the thing was said to be done are all past and gone; and the credulity of after-ages might be imposed upon to believe that things were done in former ages which were not.

And for this the two last rules secure us as much as the two first rules in the former case; for whenever such a matter of fact came to be invented, if not only monuments were said to remain of it, but likewise that public actions and observances were constantly used ever since *the matter of fact* was said to be done, the

deceit must be detected, by no such monuments appearing, and by the experience of every man, woman, and child, who must know that no such actions or observances were ever used by them. For example : suppose I should now invent a story of such a thing, done a thousand years ago, I might, perhaps, get some to believe it ; but if I say, that not only such a thing was done, but that from that day to this every man, at the age of twelve years, had a joint of his little finger cut off, and that every man in the nation did want a joint of such a finger, and that this observation was said to be part of the matter of fact done so many years ago, and vouched as a proof and confirmation of it, and as having descended, without interruption, and been constantly practised, in memory of such matter of fact, all along, from the time that such matter of fact was done : I say, it is impossible I should be believed in such a case, because every one could contradict me, as to the mark of cutting off a joint of the finger ; and that being part of my original matter of fact, must demonstrate the whole to be false.

III. Let us now come to the second point, to show, that the matters of fact of Moses and of Christ have all these rules or marks before

mentioned ; and that neither the matters of fact of Mahomet, or what is reported of the heathen deities, have the like ; and that no imposture can have them all.

1. As to Moses : I suppose it will be allowed me, that he could not have persuaded six hundred thousand men that he had brought them out of Egypt through the Red Sea, fed them forty years without bread by miraculous manna, and the other matters of fact recorded in his books, if they had not been true ; because every man's senses, that were then alive, must have contradicted it ; and therefore he must have imposed upon all their senses, if he could have made them believe it when it was false, and no such things done. So that here are the first and second of the above-mentioned four marks.

For the same reason it was equally impossible for him to have made them receive his five books as truth, and not to have rejected them as a manifest imposture, which told of all these things as done before their eyes, if they had not been so done. See how positively he speaks to them, Deut. xi. 2—8 : “ And know you this day : for I speak not with your children ; which have not known, and which have not seen the *chastisement* of the Lord your God, his great-

ness, his mighty hand, and his stretched-out arm, and his miracles, and his acts, which he did in the midst of Egypt, unto Pharaoh the King of Egypt, and unto all his land ; and what he did unto the army of Egypt, unto their horses, and to their chariots ; how he made the water of the Red Sea to overflow them as they pursued after you, and how the Lord hath destroyed them unto this day ; and what he did unto you in the wilderness, until ye came into this place ; and what he did unto Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab, the son of Reuben, how the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and their households, and their tents, and all the substance that was in their possession, in the midst of all Israel : but your eyes have seen all the great acts of the Lord, which he did," &c.

From hence we must suppose it impossible that these books of Moses, if an imposture, could have been invented and put upon the people who were then alive when all these things were said to be done.

The utmost, therefore, that even a suppose can stretch to is, that these books were written in some age after Moses, and put out in his name.

And to this I say, that if it was so, it was impossible that those books should have been received as the books of Moses in that age wherein they may be supposed to have been invented. Why? Because they speak of themselves as delivered by Moses, and kept in the ark from his time. "And it came to pass, when Moses had made an end of writing the words of this law in a book, until they were finished, that Moses commanded the Levites who bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord, saying, Take this book of the law, and put it in the side of the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, that it may be there for a witness against thee." Deut. xxxi. 24—26. And there was a copy of this book to be left likewise with the King. "And it shall be, when he sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write him a copy of this law in a book, out of that which is before the Priests the Levites: and it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life: that he may learn to fear the Lord his God, to keep all the words of this law and these statutes, to do them." Deut. xvii. 18, 19.

Here you see that this book of the law speaks *of itself*, not only as a history or relation of

what things were then done, but as the standing and municipal law and statutes of the nation of the Jews, binding the King as well as the people.

Now, in whatever age after Moses you will suppose this book to have been forged, it was impossible it could have been received as truth, because it was not then to be found either in the ark, or with the King, or anywhere else; for when first invented, every body must know that they had never heard of it before.

And therefore they could less believe it to be the book of their statutes, and the standing law of the land which they had all along received, and by which they had been governed.

Could any man, now at this day, invent a book of statutes or Acts of Parliament for England, and make it pass upon the nation as the only book of statutes that ever they had known? As impossible was it for the books of Moses (if they were invented in any age after Moses) to have been received for what they declare themselves to be, namely, the statutes and municipal law of the nation of the Jews: and to have persuaded the Jews that they had owned and acknowledged these books all along from the days of Moses, to that day in which they were first invented; that is, that they had

owned them before they had ever so much as heard of them. Nay, more, the whole nation must, in an instant, forget their former laws and government, if they could receive these books as being their former laws. And they could not otherwise receive them, because they vouched themselves so to be.

But, further, these books not only tell of wonderful things done in the days of Moses, but that from that time down all along, public institutions were observed in memory of them. As the passover in memory of the death of the first-born in Egypt, Num. viii. 17, 18; and that the same day all the first-born of Israel, both of man and beast, were, by a perpetual law, dedicated to God; and the Levites taken for all the first-born of the children of Israel;—that Aaron's rod, which budded, was kept in the ark in memory of the rebellion, and wonderful destruction, of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, and for the confirmation of the priesthood to the tribe of Levi; as likewise the pot of manna, in memory of their having been fed with it forty years in the wilderness;—that the brazen serpent was kept, (which remained to the days of Hezekiah, 2 Kings xviii. 4,) in memory of *that* wonderful deliverance, by only looking upon

it, from the biting of the fiery serpents, Num. xxi. 9 ;—the feast of Pentecost, in memory of the dreadful appearance of God upon Mount Horeb, &c.

And besides these remembrances of particular actions and occurrences, there were other solemn institutions in memory of their deliverance out of Egypt, in the general, which included all the particulars : as of the Sabbath, Deut. v. 15 ; their daily sacrifices, and yearly expiation ; their new moons, and several feasts and fasts. So that there were yearly, monthly, weekly, daily remembrances and recognitions of these things.

And not only so, but the books of the same Moses tell us, that a particular tribe (of Levi) was appointed and consecrated by God as his Priests ; by whose hands, and none other, the sacrifices of the people were to be offered, and these solemn institutions to be celebrated ;—that it was death for any other to approach to the altar ;—that their High Priest wore a glorious mitre, and magnificent robes of God's own contrivance, with the miraculous Urim and Thummim in his breast-plate, whence the divine responses were given ;—that at his word, the King and all the people were to go

out and to come in, Num. xxvii. 21;—that these Levites were likewise the chief Judges, even in all civil causes; and that it was death to resist their sentence, Deut. xvii. 8—13; 1 Chron. xxiii. 4. Now whenever it can be supposed that these books of Moses were forged in some age after Moses, it is impossible they could have been received as true, unless the forgers could have made the whole nation believe that they had received these books from their fathers, had been instructed in them when they were children, and had taught them to their children. Moreover, that they had all been circumcised, and did circumcise their children, in pursuance to what was commanded in these books;—that they had observed the yearly passover, the weekly Sabbath, the new moons, and all the several feasts, fasts, and ceremonies commanded in these books;—that they had never eaten any swine's flesh, or other meats prohibited in these books;—that they had a magnificent tabernacle, with a visible Priesthood to administer in it, which was confined to the tribe of Levi; over whom was placed a glorious High Priest, clothed with great and mighty prerogatives; whose death only could deliver *those that* were fled to the cities of refuge, &c.

I say, was it possible to have persuaded a whole nation of men, that they had known and practised all these things, if they had not done it? or secondly, to have received a book for truth, which said they had practised them, and appealed to that practice? So that here are the third and fourth of the marks above mentioned.

But now let us descend to the utmost degree of supposition; namely, that these things were practised before these books of Moses were forged; and that these books did only impose upon the nation, in making them believe that they had kept these observances in memory of such and such things as were inserted in those books.

Well, then, let us proceed upon this supposition, however groundless; and now, will not the same impossibilities occur as in the former case? For, first, this must suppose, that the Jews kept all these observances in memory of nothing, or without knowing any thing of their original, or the reason why they kept them; whereas these very observances did express the ground and reason of their being kept: as the passover, in memory of God's passing over the children of the Israelites, in that night wherein

he slew all the first-born of Egypt; and so of the rest.

But, secondly, let us suppose, contrary both to reason and matter of fact, that the Jews did not know any reason at all why they kept these observances; yet was it possible to put it upon them, that they had kept these observances in memory of what they had never heard of before that day, whensoever you will suppose that these books of Moses were first forged? For example: suppose I should now forge some romantic story of strange things done a thousand years ago; and, in confirmation of this, should endeavour to persuade the Christian world that they had, all along, from that day to this, kept the first day of the week in memory of such an hero, an Apollonius, a Barcosbas, or a Mahomet; and had all been baptized in his name, and swore by his name, and upon that very book which I had then forged, and which they never saw before, in their public judicatures; that this book was their Gospel and law, which they had, ever since that time, these thousand years past, universally received and owned, and none other. I would ask any Deist, whether he thinks it possible that such a cheat could pass, or such a legend be received, as the Gos-

pel of Christians ; and that they could be made believe, that they never had had any other Gospel ? The same reason is as to the books of Moses ; and must be as to every matter of fact which has all the four marks before mentioned ; and these marks secure any such matter of fact as much from being invented and imposed in any after-ages, as at the time when such matters of fact were said to be done.

2. Therefore, I come now, secondly, to show, that, as in the matters of fact of Moses, so, likewise, all these four marks do meet in the matters of fact which are recorded in the Gospel of our blessed Saviour ; and my work herein will be the shorter, because all that is said before of Moses and his books, is every way as applicable to Christ and his Gospel. His works and miracles are there said to be done publicly, in the face of the world, as he argued to his accusers, " I spake openly to the world, and in secret have I said nothing." John xviii. 20. It is told, Acts ii. 41, that three thousand at one time, and, Acts iv. 4, that about five thousand at another time, were converted upon conviction of what themselves had seen, what had been done publicly before their eyes, wherein it was impossible to have imposed upon them. Therefore,

here were the two first of the rules before mentioned.

Then, for the two second, baptism and the Lord's supper were instituted as perpetual memorials of these things; and they were not instituted in after-ages, but at the very time when these things were said to be done; and have been observed without interruption, in all ages, through the whole Christian world, down all the way from that time to this. And Christ himself did ordain Apostles, and other Ministers of his Gospel, to preach, and administer these sacraments, and to govern his church; and that "always, even unto the end of the world." Matt. xxviii. 20. And, accordingly, they have continued, by regular succession, to this day; and, no doubt, ever shall, while the earth shall last. So that the Christian Clergy are as notorious a matter of fact, as the tribe of Levi among the Jews; and the Gospel is as much a law to the Christians, as the books of Moses to the Jews: and it being part of the matters of fact related in the Gospel, that such an order of men were appointed by Christ, and to continue to the end of the world; consequently, if the Gospel was a fiction, and invented (as it must be) in some *ages after Christ*, then, at that time, when it

was first invented, there could be no such order of Clergy as derived themselves from the institution of Christ, which must give the lie to the Gospel, and demonstrate the whole to be false. And the matters of fact of Christ being pressed to be true, no otherwise than as there was, at that time, (whenever the Deists will suppose the Gospel to be forged,) not only public sacraments of Christ's institution, but an order of Clergy, likewise of his appointment, to administer them; and it being impossible there could be any such things before they were invented, it is as impossible that they should be received when invented; and, therefore, by what is said above, it was as impossible to have imposed upon mankind in this matter, by inventing of it in after-ages, as at the time when those things were said to be done.

3. The matters of fact of Mahomet, or what is fabled of the heathen deities, do all want some of the aforesaid four rules, whereby the certainty of matters of fact are demonstrated. First, for Mahomet: he pretended to no miracles, as he tells us in his Alcoran, cap. 6, &c.; and those which are commonly told of him pass among the Mahometans themselves but as legendary fables, and, as such, are rejected by the wise

and learned amongst them ; as the legends of their saints are in the Church of Rome. See Dr. Prideaux's " Life of Mahomet," page 34.

But, in the next place, those which are told of him do all want the two first rules before mentioned. For his pretended converse with the moon, his mesra, or night-journey from Mecca to Jerusalem, and thence to heaven, &c., were not performed before any body. We have only his own word for them ; and they are as groundless as the delusions of such men as Muggleton amongst ourselves. The same is to be said, in the second place, of the fables of the heathen gods ; of Mercury's stealing sheep, Jupiter's turning himself into a bull, and the like ; besides the folly and unworthiness of such senseless pretended miracles. And, moreover, the wise among the Heathen did reckon no otherwise of these but as fables, which had a mythology, or mystical meaning in them, of which several of them have given us the *rationale*, or explication : and it is plain enough that Ovid meant no other by all his metamorphoses.

It is true, the heathen deities had their Priests: they had likewise feasts, games, and other public institutions in memory of them. But all *these* want the fourth mark ; namely, that such

priesthood and institutions should commence from the time that such things as they commemorate were said to be done; otherwise they cannot secure after-ages from the imposture, by detecting it at the time when first invented, as hath been argued before. But the Bacchanalia and other heathen feasts were instituted many ages after what was reported of these gods was said to be done, and therefore can be no proof of them. And the Priests of Bacchus, Apollo, &c., were not ordained by these supposed gods; but were appointed by others, in after-ages, only in honour to them; and therefore these orders of Priests are no evidence to the truth of the matters of fact which are reported of their gods.

IV. Now to apply what has been said: you may challenge all the Deists in the world to show any action that is fabulous, which has all the four rules or marks before mentioned. No; it is impossible. And (to resume a little what is spoken to before) the histories of Exodus and the Gospel could never have been received, if they had not been true; because the institution of the priesthood of Levi, and of Christ; of the Sabbath, the passover, of circumcision, of baptism, and the Lord's supper, &c., are there related as descending all the way down from those

times, without interruption. And it is full as impossible to persuade men, that they had been circumcised, baptized, had circumcised or baptized their children, celebrated passovers, Sabbaths, sacraments, &c., under the government and administration of a certain order of Priests, if they had done none of these things, as to make them believe that they had gone through seas upon dry land, seen the dead raised, &c. : and without believing of these, it was impossible that either the law or the Gospel could have been received.

And the truth of the matters of fact of Exodus and the Gospel, being no otherwise pressed upon men than as they have practised such public institutions, it is appealing to the senses of mankind for the truth of them ; and makes it impossible for any to have invented such stories in after-ages, without a palpable detection of the cheat when first invented ; as impossible as to have imposed upon the senses of mankind, at the time when such public matters of fact were said to be done.

V. I do not say, that every thing which wants these four marks is false ; but that nothing can be false which has them all.

I have no manner of doubt that there was

such a man as Julius Cæsar, that he fought at Pharsalia, was killed in the Senate-house; and many other matters of fact of ancient times, though, we keep no public observances in memory of them.

But this shows, that the matters of fact of Moses and of Christ have come down to us better guarded than any other matters of fact, how true soever.

And yet our Deists, who would laugh any man out of the world, as an irrational brute, that should offer to deny Cæsar, or Alexander, Homer, or Virgil, their public works and actions, do, at the same time, value themselves as the only men of wit and sense, of free, generous, and unbiassed judgments for ridiculing the histories of Moses and Christ, that are infinitely better attested, and guarded with infallible marks, which the others want.

VI. Besides that the importance of the subject would oblige all men to inquire more narrowly into the one than the other: for what consequence is it to me, or to the world, whether there was such a man as Cæsar, whether he beat or was beaten at Pharsalia, whether Homer or Virgil wrote such books, and whether what is related in the Iliads or Æneids be true or false?

It is not twopence up or down to any man in the world. And therefore it is worth no man's while to inquire into it, either to oppose or justify the truth of these relations.

But our very souls and bodies, both this life and eternity, are concerned in the truth of what is related in the holy Scriptures; and therefore men would be more inquisitive to search into the truth of these, than of any other matters of fact; examine and sift them narrowly; and find out the deceit, if any such could be found: for it concerned them nearly, and was of the last importance to them.

How unreasonable then is it to reject these matters of fact, so sifted, so examined, and so attested as no other matters of fact in the world ever were; and yet to think it the most highly unreasonable, even to madness, to deny other matters of fact, which have not the thousandth part of their evidence, and are of no consequence at all to us, whether true or false !

VII. There are several other topics, from whence the truth of the Christian religion is evinced to all who will judge by reason, and give themselves leave to consider. As the improbability that ten or twelve poor illiterate fishermen should form a design of converting the

whole world to believe their delusions; and the impossibility of their effecting it, without force of arms, learning, oratory, or any one visible thing that could recommend them! And to impose a doctrine quite opposite to the lusts and pleasures of men, and all worldly advantages, or enjoyments! and this in an age of so great learning and sagacity as that wherein the Gospel was first preached! That these Apostles should not only undergo all the scorn and contempt, but the severest persecutions and most cruel deaths, that could be inflicted, in attestation to what themselves knew to be a mere deceit and forgery of their own contriving! Some have suffered for errors which they thought to be truth; but never any for what themselves knew to be lies. And the Apostles must know what they taught to be lies, if it was so, because they spoke of those things which they said they had both seen and heard, had looked upon and handled with their hands, &c. Acts iv. 20; 1 John i. 1.

Neither can it be said, that they, perhaps, might have proposed some temporal advantages to themselves, but missed of them, and met with sufferings instead of them; for, if it had been so, it is more than probable that when they saw

their disappointment, they would have discovered their conspiracy, especially when they might not only have saved their lives, but got great rewards for doing of it: that not one of them should ever have been brought to do this!

But this is not all: for they tell us that their Master bid them expect nothing but sufferings in this world. This is the tenure of all that Gospel which they taught; and they told the same to all whom they converted. So that here was no disappointment.

For all that were converted by them were converted upon the certain expectation of sufferings, and bidden to prepare for it. Christ commanded his disciples to take up their cross daily and follow him; and told them, that in the world they should have tribulation; that whoever did not forsake father, mother, wife, children, lands, and their very lives, could not be his disciples; that he who sought to save his life in this world should lose it in the next.

Now that this despised doctrine of the cross should prevail so universally against the allurements of flesh and blood, and all the blandishments of this world; against the rage and persecution of all the Kings and powers of the earth, must show its Original to be divine, and

its Protector almighty. What is it else could conquer without arms, persuade without rhetoric, overcome enemies, disarm tyrants, and subdue empires without opposition?

VIII. We may add to all this the testimonies of the most bitter enemies and persecutors of Christianity, both Jews and Gentiles, to the truth of the matter of fact of Christ; such as Josephus and Tacitus, of which the first flourished about forty years after the death of Christ, and the other about seventy years after; so that they were capable of examining into the truth, and wanted not prejudice and malice sufficient to have inclined them to deny the matter of fact itself of Christ; but their confessing to it, as likewise Lucian, Celsus, Porphyry, and Julian the apostate, the Mahometans since, and all other enemies of Christianity that have arisen in the world, is an undeniable attestation to the truth of the matter of fact.

IX. These and other topics, which have been insisted upon by those who have managed this argument, cannot nor ought not to be denied by any man who pretends to common sense. And it is very lamentable to see a wide mouth, a scornful nod, or leer, and a noisy effrontery, impatient of argument or contradiction, carry it away with some unthinking people against all

the reason and authority in the world ; only because they say, that, notwithstanding all your probabilities, however artfully laid together, yet it is possible to be otherwise : and they demand, for matters of fact long since past, a demonstration from the outward senses of the present age ; that is, that I should see or hear what was before I was born ; which is a method they would hoot at, if proposed in any other case.

X. But though we cannot see what was done before our time, yet, by the marks which I have laid down concerning the certainty of matters of fact done before our time, we may be as much assured of the truth of them, as if we saw them with our eyes ; because whatever matter of fact has all the four marks before mentioned, could never have been invented and received but upon the conviction of the outward senses of all those who did receive it, as before is demonstrated. And, therefore, this topic which I have chosen does stand upon the conviction even of men's outward senses. And since you have confined me to one topic, I have not insisted upon the others, which I have only named.

XI. And now it lies upon the Deists, if they *would* appear as men of reason, to show some *matter of fact* of former ages, which they allow

to be true, that has greater evidences of its truth than the matters of fact of Moses and of Christ ; otherwise they cannot, with any show of reason, reject the one, and yet admit the other.

But I have given them greater latitude than this ; for I have shown such marks of the truth of the matters of fact of Moses and of Christ as no other matters of fact of those times, however true, have but these only ; and I put it upon them to show any forgery that has all these marks.

This is a short issue. Keep them close to this. This determines the cause all at once.

Let them produce their Apollonius Tyanæus, whose life was put into English by the execrable Charles Blount,* and compared with all the

* The hand of that scorner which durst write such outrageous blasphemy against his Maker, the divine vengeance has made his own executioner : which I would not have mentioned, because the like judgment has befallen others, but that "the Theistical Club" have set this up as a principle, and printed a vindication of this same Blount for murdering of himself, by way of justification of self-murder ; which some of them have since, as well as formerly, horridly practised upon themselves. Therefore this is no common judgment to which they are delivered, but a visible mark set upon them, to show how far God has forsaken them, and as a caution to all Christians to beware of them, and not to come near the tents of these wicked men, lest they perish in their destruction both of soul and body.

wit and malice he was master of, to the life and miracles of our blessed Saviour.

Let them take aid from all the legends in the Church of Rome, those pious cheats, the sorest disgraces of Christianity, and which have bidden the fairest of any one contrivance to overturn the certainty of the miracles of Christ and his Apostles, and whole truth of the Gospel, by putting them all upon the same foot ; at least, they are so understood by the generality of their devotees, though disowned and laughed at by the learned and men of sense among them.

Let them pick and choose the most probable of all the fables of the heathen deities, and see if they can find in any of these the four marks before mentioned.

Otherwise let them submit to the irrefragable certainty of the Christian religion.

XII. But if, notwithstanding of all that is said, the Deists will still contend that all this is but priestcraft, the invention of Priests for their own profit, &c. ; then they will give us an idea of Priests far different from what they intend : for then we must look upon these Priests not only as the cunningest and wisest of mankind, but we shall be tempted to adore them as *deities*, who have such power as to impose, at *their* pleasure, upon the senses of mankind, to

make them believe that they had practised such public institutions, enacted them by laws, taught them to their children, &c., when they had never done any of these things, or ever so much as heard of them before; and then, upon the credit of their believing that they had done such things as they never did, to make them further believe, upon the same foundation, whatever they pleased to impose upon them as to former ages: I say, such a power as this must exceed all that is human, and, consequently, make us rank these Priests far above the condition of mortals.

2. Nay, this were to make them outdo all that has ever been related of the infernal powers; for though their legerdemain has extended to deceive some unwary beholders, and their power of working some seeming miracles has been great, yet it never reached, nor ever was supposed to reach, so far as to deceive the senses of all mankind in matters of such public and notorious nature as those of which we now speak,—to make them believe that they had enacted laws for such public observances, continually practised them, taught them to their children, and had been instructed in them themselves from their childhood, if they had never enacted, practised, taught, or been taught such things.

3. And as this exceeds all the power of hell and devils, so is it more than ever God Almighty has done since the foundation of the world. None of the miracles that he has shown, or belief which he has required to anything that he has revealed, has ever contradicted the outward senses of any one man in the world, much less of all mankind together. For miracles being appeals to our outward senses, if they should overthrow the certainty of our outward senses, must destroy with it all their own certainty as to us ; since we have no other way to judge of a miracle exhibited to our senses, than upon the supposition of the certainty of our senses, upon which we give credit to a miracle that is shown to our senses.

4. This, by the way, is a yet unanswered argument against the miracle of transubstantiation ; and shows the weakness of the defence which the Church of Rome offers for it, (from whom the Socinians have taken it up, and, of late, have gloried much in it amongst us,) that the doctrines of the Trinity, or incarnation, contain as great seeming absurdities as that of transubstantiation : for I would ask which of our senses it is which the doctrines of the Trinity or incarnation do contradict. Is it our seeing, hearing, feeling,

taste, or smell? Whereas transubstantiation does contradict all of these. Therefore the comparison is exceedingly short, and out of purpose. But to return.

If the Christian religion be a cheat, and nothing else but the invention of Priests, and carried on by their craft, it makes their power and wisdom greater than that of men, angels, or devils; and more than God himself ever yet showed or expressed; to deceive and impose upon the senses of mankind in such public and notorious matters of fact.

XIII. And this miracle, which the Deists must run into to avoid these recorded of Moses and Christ, is much greater and more astonishing than all the Scriptures tell of them.

So that these men, who laugh at all miracles, are now obliged to account for the greatest of all,—how the senses of mankind could be imposed upon in such public matters of fact.

And how then can they make the Priests the most contemptible of all mankind, since they make them the sole authors of this the greatest of miracles?

XIV. And since the Deists (these men of sense and reason!) have so vile and mean an idea of the Priests of all religions, why do they

not recover the world out of the possession and government of such blockheads? Why do they suffer Kings and states to be led by them? to establish their deceits by laws, and inflict penalties upon the opposers of them? Let the Deists try their hands: they have been trying, and are now very busy about it; and free liberty they have, yet have they not prevailed, nor ever yet did prevail in any civilized or generous nation. And though they have made some inroads among the Hottentots, and some other of the most brutal part of mankind, yet are they still exploded; and Priests have and do prevail against them, among not only the greatest but best part of the world, and the most glorious for arts and learning.

XV. For as the devil does ape God in his institutions of religion, his feasts, sacrifices, &c., so likewise in his Priests; without whom, no religion, whether true or false, can stand: false religion is but a corruption of the true; the true was before it, though it followed close upon the heels. The revelation made to Moses is elder than any history extant in the heathen world. The Heathens, in imitation of him, pretended likewise to their revelations; but I *have* given those marks which distinguish them *from* the true; none of them have those four

marks before mentioned. Now the Deists think all revelations to be equally pretended and a cheat, and the Priests of all religions to be the same contrivers and jugglers; and therefore they proclaim war equally against all, and are equally engaged to bear the brunt of all: and, if the contest be only betwixt the Deists and the Priests, which of them are the men of the greatest parts and sense, let the effects determine it; and let the Deists yield the victory to their conquerors, who, by their own confession, carry all the world before them.

XVI. If the Deists say that this is because all the world are blockheads, as well as these Priests who govern them; that all are blockheads except the Deists, who vote themselves only to be men of sense; this (besides the modesty of it) will spoil their great and beloved topic in behalf of what they call "natural religion" against the revealed; namely, appealing to the common reason of mankind: this they set up against revelation; think this to be sufficient for all the uses of men here or hereafter, (if there be any after-state,) and therefore that there is no use of revelation; this common reason they advance as infallible, at least, as the surest guide, yet now cry out upon it when it

turns against them ; when this common reason runs after revelation, (as it always has done,) then common reason is a beast, and we must look for reason, not from the common sentiments of mankind, but only among the beaux the Deists !

XVII. Therefore, if the Deists would avoid the mortification (which will be very uneasy to them) to yield and submit, to be subdued and hewed down before the Priests, whom of all mankind they hate and despise ; if they would avoid this, let them confess, as the truth is, that religion is no invention of Priests, but of divine original : that Priests were instituted by the same author of religion, and that their order is a perpetual and living monument of the matters of fact of their religion, instituted from the time that such matters of fact were said to be done, as the Levites from Moses ; the Apostles and succeeding Clergy from Christ, to this day : that no heathen Priest can say the same ; they were not appointed by the gods whom they served, but by others in after-ages ; they cannot stand the test of the four rules before mentioned, which the Christian Priests can do, and they only. Now the Christian *priesthood*, as instituted by Christ himself, and

continued by succession to this day, is as impregnable and flagrant a testimony to the truth of the matters of fact of Christ, as the sacraments, or any other public institution.

XVIII. Let us consider and honour the priesthood, sacraments, and other public institutions of Christ, not only as means of grace and helps to devotion, but as the great evidences of the Christian religion. They are such evidences as no pretended revelation ever had, or can have; such as do plainly distinguish it from all foolish legends and impostures whatsoever.

XIX. And now, last of all, if one word of advice would not be lost upon men who think so unmeasurably of themselves as the Deists, you may represent to them what a condition they are in who spend that life and sense which God has given them, in ridiculing the greatest of his blessings, his revelations of Christ, and, by Christ, to redeem those from eternal misery who shall believe in him and obey his laws; and that God, in his wonderful mercy and wisdom, has so guarded his revelations, as that it is past the power of men or devils to counterfeit; and that there is no denying of them, unless we will be so absurd as to deny not only the reason, but the certainty, of the outward senses, not only of

one, or two, or three, but of mankind in general: that this case is so very plain, that nothing but want of thought can hinder any from discovering it; that they must yield it to be so plain, unless they can show some forgery which has all the four marks before set down: but if they cannot do this, they must quit their cause, and yield a happy victory over themselves; or else sit down under all that ignominy with which they have loaded the Priests, of being not only the most pernicious, but, what will gall them more, the most inconsiderate and superficial, of mankind.

Therefore let them not think it an undervaluing of their worthiness, that their whole cause is comprised within so narrow a compass, and no more time bestowed upon it than it is worth.

But let them rather reflect how far they have been all this time from Christianity, whose rudiments they have yet to learn; how far from the way of salvation; how far the race of their lives is run before they have set one step in the road to heaven; and, therefore, how much diligence they ought to use, to redeem all that time they have lost, lest they lose themselves for ever; and be convinced by a dreadful experience, when it is too late, that the Gospel is a truth, *and of the last consequence.*

CONVERSATION

WITH

A YOUNG TRAVELLER.

BY

JOHN M. MASON, D.D.

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CONVERSATION

WITH

A YOUNG TRAVELLER.

EVERY one has remarked the mixed, and often ill-assorted, company which meets in a public packet or stage-coach. The conversation, with all its variety, is commonly insipid, frequently disgusting, and sometimes insufferable. There are exceptions. An opportunity now and then occurs of spending an hour in a manner not unworthy of rational beings; and the incidents of a stage-coach produce or promote salutary impressions.

A few years ago, one of the stages which ply between our two principal cities was filled with a group which could never have been drawn together by mutual choice. In the company was a young man of sociable temper, affable manners, and considerable information. His

accent was barely sufficient to show that the English was not his native tongue, and a very slight peculiarity in the pronunciation of the "th" ascertained him to be a Hollander. He had early entered into military life; had borne both a Dutch and a French commission; had seen real service, had travelled, was master of the English language, and evinced by his deportment, that he was no stranger to the society of gentlemen. He had, however, in a very high degree, a fault too common among military men, and too absurd to find an advocate among men of sense,—he swore profanely and incessantly.

While the horses were changing, a gentleman who sat on the same seat with him, took him by the arm, and requested the favour of his company in a short walk. When they were so far retired as not to be overheard, the former observed, "Although I have not the honour of your acquaintance, I perceive, Sir, that your habits and feelings are those of a gentleman, and that nothing can be more repugnant to your wishes than giving unnecessary pain to any of your company." He started, and replied, "Most certainly, Sir: I hope I have committed no offence of that sort."

"You will pardon me," replied the other, "for pointing out an instance in which you have not altogether avoided it."

"Sir," said he, "I shall be much your debtor for so friendly an act; for, upon my honour, I cannot conjecture in what I have transgressed."

"If you, Sir," continued the former, "had a very dear friend, to whom you were under unspeakable obligations, should you not be deeply wounded by any disrespect to him, or even by hearing his name introduced and used with a frequency of repetition and a levity of air incompatible with the regard due to his character?"

"Undoubtedly, and I should not permit it; but I know not that I am chargeable with indecorum to any of your friends."

"Sir, my God is my best friend, to whom I am under infinite obligations. I think you must recollect that you have very frequently, since we commenced our journey, taken his name in vain. This has given to me, and to others of the company, excruciating pain."

"Sir," answered he, with very ingenuous emphasis, "I have done wrong. I confess the impropriety. I am ashamed of a practice which

I am sensible has no excuse ; but I have imperceptibly fallen into it, and I really swear without being conscious that I do so. I will endeavour to abstain from it in future ; and as you are next me in the seat, I shall thank you to touch my elbow as often as I trespass." This was agreed upon ; the horn sounded, and the travellers resumed their places.

In the space of four or five miles the officer's elbow was jogged every few seconds. He always coloured, but bowed, and received the hint without the least symptom of displeasure ; and in a few miles more so mastered his propensity to swearing, that not an oath was heard from his lips for the rest, which was the greater part, of the journey.

He was evidently more grave ; and having ruminated some time, after surveying first one and then another of the company, turned to his admonisher, and addressed him thus :—

" You are a Clergyman, I presume, Sir."

" I am considered as such." He paused ; and then, with a smile, indicated his disbelief in divine revelation, in a way which invited conversation on that subject.

" I have never been able to convince myself of the truth of revelation."

"Possibly not. But what is your difficulty?"

"I dislike the nature of its proofs. They are so subtle, so distant, so wrapped in mystery, so metaphysical, that I get lost, and can arrive at no certain conclusion."

"I cannot admit the fact to be as you represent it. My impressions are altogether different. Nothing seems to me more plain and popular; more level to every common understanding; more remote from all cloudy speculation, or teasing subtleties, than some of the principal proofs of divine revelation. They are drawn from great and incontestable facts; they are accumulating every hour. They have grown into such a mass of evidence, that the supposition of its falsehood is infinitely more incredible than any one mystery in the volumes of revelation, or even than all their mysteries put together. Your inquiries, Sir, appear to have been unhappily directed; but what sort of proof do you desire, and what would satisfy you?"

"Such proofs as accompany physical science. This I have always loved; for I never find it deceive me. I rest upon it with entire conviction. There is no mistake, and can be no dispute, in mathematics. And if a re-

velation comes from God, why have we not such evidence for it as mathematical demonstration?"

"Sir, you are too good a philosopher not to know that the nature of evidence must be adapted to the nature of its object; that if you break in upon this adaptation, you will have no evidence at all; seeing that evidence is no more interchangeable than objects. If you ask for mathematical evidence, you must confine yourself to mathematical disquisitions. Your subject must be 'quantity.' If you wish to pursue a moral investigation, you must quit your mathematics, and confine yourself to moral evidence. Your subject must be the 'relations which subsist between intelligent beings.' It would be quite as wise to apply a rule in ethics to the calculation of an eclipse, as to call for Euclid when we want to know our duty, or to submit the question, 'whether God has spoken,' to the test of a problem in the conic sections. How would you prove mathematically that bread nourishes men, and that fevers kill them? Yet you and I both are as firmly convinced of the truth of these propositions, as of any *mathematical* demonstration whatever; and should

I call them in question, my neighbours would either pity me as an idiot, or shut me up as a madman. It is, therefore, a great mistake to suppose, that there is no satisfactory nor certain evidence but what is reducible to mathematics."

This train of reflection appeared new to him. For, however obvious it is, we must remember that nothing is more superficial than free-thinking philosophy, and nothing more credulous than its unbelief. Dogmatical positions, asserted with confidence, set off with small ridicule, and favourable to native depravity, have a prodigious effect upon the volatile youth; and persuade him that they have enlightened his understanding, when they have only flattered his vanity, or corrupted his heart.

The officer, though staggered, made an effort to maintain his ground, and lamented that the "objections to other modes of reasoning are numerous and perplexing, while the mathematical conclusion puts all scepticism at defiance."

"Sir," rejoined the Clergyman, "objections against a thing fairly proved are of no weight. The proof rests upon our knowledge, and the

objections upon our ignorance. It is true, that moral demonstrations and religious doctrines may be attacked in a very ingenious and plausible manner, because they involve questions on which our ignorance is greater than our knowledge; but still our knowledge is knowledge; or, in other words, our certainty is certainty. In mathematical reasoning our knowledge is greater than our ignorance. When you have proved that the three angles of every triangle are equal to two right angles, there is an end of doubt; because there are no materials for ignorance to work up into phantoms; but your knowledge is really no more certain than your knowledge on any other subject.

“There is also a deception in this matter. The defect complained of is supposed to exist in the nature of the proof; whereas it exists, for the most part, in the mind of the inquirer. It is impossible to tell how far the influence of human depravity obscures the light of human reason.”

At the mention of “depravity,” the officer smiled, and seemed inclined to jest; probably suspecting, as is common with men of that class, *that* his antagonist was going to retreat into his

creed, and entrench himself behind a technical term, instead of an argument. The triumph was premature.

“You do not imagine, Sir,” said he, continuing his discourse to the officer, “you do not imagine that a man who has been long addicted to stealing, feels the force of reasoning against theft as strongly as a man of tried honesty. If you hesitate, proceed a step further. You do not imagine that an habitual thief feels as much abhorrence of his own trade and character, as a man who never committed an act of theft in his whole life. And you will not deny that the practice of any crime gradually weakens, and frequently destroys, the sense of its turpitude. This is a strong fact, which, as a philosopher, you are bound to explain. To me it is clear as the day, that his vice has debauched his intellect; for it is indisputable, that the considerations which once filled him with horror, produce now no more impression upon him than they would produce upon a horse. Why? Has the vice changed? Have the considerations changed? No. The vice is as pernicious, and the considerations are as strong, as ever. But his power of perceiving truth is diminished; and diminished by his

vice; for, had he not fallen into it, the considerations would have retained, and, should he be saved from it, they would resume, their original force upon his mind. Permit yourself, for one moment, to reflect how hard it is to persuade men of the virtues of others against whom they are prejudiced. You shall bring no proof of the virtues which the prejudice shall not resist or evade. Remove the prejudice, and the proof appears invincible. Why? Have the virtues changed? has the proof been strengthened? No. But the power of perceiving truth is increased; or, which is the same thing, the impediment to perceiving it is taken away. If, then, there are bad passions among men; and if the object of divine revelation is to control and rectify them; it follows, that a man to whom the revelation is proposed will be blind to its evidence, in exact proportion to the perverting influence of those passions. And were the human mind free from corruption, there is no reason whatever to think that a moral argument would not be as conclusive as a mathematical argument is now; and that the principles of moral and religious science would not *command* an assent as instantaneous and peremptory

as that which is commanded by mathematical axioms."

After a short pause, in which no reply was made by the officer, and the looks of the company revealed their sentiments, the Clergyman proceeded:—

"But what will you say, Sir, should I endeavour to turn the tables upon you, by showing that the evidence of your physical science is not without its difficulties; and that objections can be urged against mathematical demonstration more puzzling and unanswerable than any objections against moral evidence?"

"I shall yield the cause; but I am sure that the condition is impossible."

"Let us try," said the other.

"I begin with a common case:—the Newtonian system of the world is so perfectly settled, that no scholar presumes to question it. Go, then, to a peasant who never heard of Newton, nor Copernicus, nor the solar system; and tell him that the earth moves round its axis, and round the sun. He will stare at you to see whether you be not jeering him; and when he sees you are in earnest, he will laugh at you for a fool. Ply him, now, with your mathematical and astronomical reasoning. He

will answer you, that he believes his own eyesight more than your learning; and his eyesight tells him the sun moves round the earth. And as for the earth's turning round upon her axis, he will say, that 'he has often hung a kettle over the kitchen fire at night, and when he came back in the morning, it was hanging there still; but, had the earth turned round, the kettle would have been turned over, and the mash spilled over the floor.' You are amused with the peasant's simplicity, but you cannot convince him. His objection is, in his own eyes, insurmountable: he will tell the affair to his neighbours as a good story; and they will agree that he fairly shut the philosopher's mouth. You may reply, that 'the peasant was introduced into the middle of a matured science, and that, not having learned its elements, he was unsupplied with the principles of correct judgment.' True; but your solution has overthrown yourself. A free-thinker, when he hears some great doctrine of Christianity, lets off a small objection, and runs away laughing at the folly, or railing at the imposture, of all who venture to defend a divine revelation; he gathers his brother unbelievers, and they unite with him in wondering at the

weakness or the impudence of Christians. He is in the very situation of the peasant. He bolts into the heart of a grand religious system; he has never adverted to its first principles, and then he complains that the evidence is bad. But the fault in neither case lies in the evidence; it lies in the ignorance or obstinacy of the objector. The peasant's ground is as firm as the infidel's. The proof of the Newtonian system is to the former as distant, subtle, and cloudy, as the proof of revelation can be to the latter; and the objection of the one, as good as the objection of the other. If the depravity of men had as much interest in persuading them that the earth is not globular, and does not move round the sun, as it has in persuading them that the Bible is not true, a mathematical demonstration would fail of converting them, although the demonstrator were an angel of God.

“But with respect to the other point, namely, that there are objections to mathematical evidence more puzzling and unanswerable than can be alleged against moral reasoning; take the two following instances:—

“It is mathematically demonstrated that matter is infinitely divisible; that is, has an

infinite number of parts: a line, then, of half an inch long, has an infinite number of parts. Who does not see the absurdity of an infinite half inch? Try the difficulty another way. It requires some portion of time to pass any portion of space. Then as your half inch has an infinite number of parts, it requires an infinite number of portions of time for a moving point to pass by the infinite number of parts; but an infinite number of portions of time is an eternity! Consequently, it requires an eternity, or something like it, to move half an inch."

"But, Sir," interposed the officer, "you do not deny the accuracy of the demonstration, that matter is infinitely divisible." "Not in the least, Sir; I perceive no flaw in the chain of demonstration, and yet I perceive the result to be infinitely absurd.

"Again: it is mathematically demonstrated that a straight line, called the asymptote of the hyperbola, may eternally approach the curve of the hyperbola, and yet can never meet it. Now, as all demonstrations are built upon axioms, an axiom must always be plainer than a demonstration; and, to my judgment, *it is as plain*, that, if two lines continually

approach, they shall meet, as that the whole is greater than its part. Here, therefore, I am fixed. I have a demonstration directly in the teeth of an axiom, and am equally incapable of denying either side of the contradiction."

"Sir," exclaimed the officer, clapping his hands together, "I own I am beaten, completely beaten; I have nothing more to say."

A silence of some minutes succeeded; when the young military traveller said to his theological friend, "I have studied all religions, and have not been able to satisfy myself."

"No, Sir," answered he, "there is one religion which you have not yet studied."

"Pray, Sir," cried the officer, roused and eager, "what is that?"

"The religion," replied the other, "of salvation through the redemption of the Son of God: the religion which will sweeten your pleasures, and soften your sorrows; which will give peace to your conscience, and joy to your heart; which will bear you up under the pressure of evils here, and shed the light of immortality on the gloom of the grave. This religion, I believe, Sir, you have yet to study."

The officer put his hands upon his face; then languidly clasping them, let them fall down, forced a smile, and said, with a sigh, "We must all follow what we think best." His behaviour afterwards was perfectly decorous. Nothing further is known of him; except that before he left the United States he is said to have turned his serious attention to the subject of Christianity, and expressed his full conviction of its truth and divine authority.

THE END.



